

***California's Proposition 19 Will Harm Public Health,
Increase Drug-Related Problems***

**Remarks by Robert L. DuPont, M.D.
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As a medical doctor who has worked for more than four decades in drug abuse treatment and prevention I am certain that the Regulate, Control and Tax Cannabis Act of 2010, known as Proposition 19, to legalize marijuana use in California will have a seriously negative impact on the nation's public health. If passed, Proposition 19 will lead more people into addiction and subsequently into treatment.

The leaders of legalization efforts ignore the powerful public health benefit that results from keeping marijuana use illegal. Federal drug laws support both prevention and treatment by making clear that marijuana use is unacceptable in the United States -- as it is throughout the world.

Marijuana use is a significant cause of highway crashes in the US, second only to alcohol use. Marijuana use also causes more drug abuse and addiction than the use of all other illegal drugs combined. The latest results from the National Survey on Drug Use and Mental Health (NSDUH) state that "marijuana was the illicit drug with the highest rate of past year dependence or abuse in 2008...Of the 7.0 million persons aged 12 or older classified with dependence on or abuse of illicit drugs in 2008, 4.2 million were dependent on or abused marijuana or hashish (representing 1.7 percent of the total population aged 12 or older, and 60.1 percent of all those classified with illicit drug dependence or abuse)." According to a recent RAND study, if Proposition 19 were passed, there would be a 58% increase in annual marijuana consumption, leading to an additional 144,000 to 380,000 users meeting criteria for abuse or dependence and 2,500 new treatment admissions at an additional cost of \$1.5 to \$9 million dollars annually. Legalization of marijuana will make public health problems worse.

I urge California voters to protect the public health and vote against Proposition 19. There are plenty of good new ideas to reduce drug problems, including drug-caused violence, in the United States. The legalization of marijuana is not one of them.

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