

# San Francisco Chronicle

## SUNDAY INSIGHT

### Legalizing marijuana is bad for California

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Imagine California as a magnet that feeds the illicit drug trade for the entire North American continent. Is that what we want to incubate as one of the Golden State's prime industries?

As protectors of public safety, members of the California Police Chiefs Association see only problems associated with Proposition 19, the initiative on the November ballot to legalize recreational marijuana. Prop. 19 threatens communities already beset by drug abuse and narcotics trafficking. Simply put, Prop. 19 will undermine public health and public safety in California. Here's how.

#### **Drugged driving makes our roads more dangerous.**

Prop. 19 allows a state and a workplace where any driver over the age of 21 can get on the road with marijuana in their system. The tragic death of Carrie Jean Holiman, 56, a fifth-grade teacher mowed down July 22 while jogging near Chico by a stoned driver, is a harbinger of things to come if Prop. 19 were to pass.

"Drugged driving" incidents are on the rise, and this initiative does not establish standards for driving under the influence of marijuana. Law enforcement will have very little recourse to keep those drugged drivers off the road.

Transit drivers and everyday commuters will be able to drive while under the influence of marijuana. That fact alone should be enough to oppose this measure.

#### **Marijuana use among youth correlates with lower academic performance in school.**

Studies have shown that expanded availability and perceived social acceptability will increase marijuana use among youth. Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC - the main active ingredient in marijuana) impairs the development of the adolescent brain.

The percentage of kids in drug counseling for marijuana addiction has been increasing annually, and the resulting negative effects place our youth's development and our future workforce at risk. With Prop. 19, increased availability and use by youth will lead to increased addiction.

**Public safety will suffer, and the quality of life in our communities will deteriorate.**

The truth is the production and distribution of marijuana is already big business and controlled by violent drug cartels. Should this initiative pass, the cartels are well positioned and eagerly awaiting a greatly expanded marketplace. We need only look at the violence occurring among warring drug cartels along our border with Mexico to imagine what California might experience.

A recent Rand Corp. study concluded that passage of Prop. 19 would cause marijuana prices to fall so low that criminal organizations will flock to California to buy their dope for resale in their home states. In effect, Prop. 19 will make California a launching pad for illicit marijuana dealing across the country. Far from freeing up law enforcement to deal with serious crime, as proponents claim, Prop. 19 would mean we would be overwhelmed by international drug cartels that use violence and guns to protect their lucrative markets.

Closer to home, Prop. 19 would allow anyone to grow marijuana anywhere - in a vacant lot near a school yard or in a house next door to *you*. Community groups in San Francisco's Sunset District are dealing with fire hazards, security and safety issues posed by these grow houses, which have seriously degraded the quality of life in their community.

**Costs will outweigh the supposed revenues.**

Are we really serious about introducing more mind-altering substances into our society because it might produce tax revenues? The independent Rand study has warned that any tax revenue benefits produced by Prop. 19 are highly speculative, at best. Marijuana still remains illegal under federal law, thus any locally imposed taxes are legally uncollectible, according to case law, which states that no one can be compelled to pay a tax that might subject them to prosecution by the federal government.

Then there are the social and health costs. Law enforcement officers see countless emergency room cases where drugs containing anything from pesticides to rat poison have been known to cause severe health problems, yet Prop. 19 offers no regulation, standardization or oversight to ensure safe, nontoxic marijuana would be sold, packaged or distributed. Because marijuana is addicting and people do seek treatment for it, increased use will lead to increased addiction and increased treatment costs. These costs would outweigh any potential revenue derived.

**Legalization will cost California billions of dollars in federal funding.**

Because Prop. 19 protects marijuana use in the workplace, it would put California out of compliance with the federal Drug Free Workplace Act, according to research done by the California Chamber of Commerce. Compliance with that act is required for federal funding. California could lose up to \$40 billion annually in federal aid and grants affecting schools, businesses and government contracts. Please join me and the many law enforcement groups, faith leaders, victim's rights advocates and employers throughout California who all oppose Prop. 19. It's ill conceived, badly written and creates significant health and safety problems. Drug use is damaging to our communities, our youth and everyone we are sworn to serve and protect. How could we make access to drugs easier?

**PROPOSITION 19 COMMENTARY AND NEWS**

**Joseph D. McNamara**, former San Jose police chief and now a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, says most bad things about marijuana - especially the violence its black market engenders - are caused by the prohibition, not the drug. He recommends a yes vote on Prop. 19. To read his commentary in the July 25 Insight section, go to [sfg.ly/byeZxa](http://sfg.ly/byeZxa).

**Pleasant Hill Police Chief Pete Dunbar**, representing the No on Proposition 19 campaign, and Joseph D. McNamara answered readers' questions during a telephone seminar. To listen to their discussion, go to [sfg.ly/9LaXng](http://sfg.ly/9LaXng). To read a summary, go to [sfg.ly/9gZRRR](http://sfg.ly/9gZRRR).

**"How healthy - or dangerous - is marijuana use?,"** a report by Chronicle staff writer Kevin Fagan, finds that with only sporadic research because marijuana use is illegal under federal law, there is a huge gray area that allows both proponents and opponents to make claims. [sfg.ly/9wDu6q](http://sfg.ly/9wDu6q).

**"High times with legalized pot? It all depends,"** a report by Chronicle staff writer Kevin Fagan, says a Rand study projects that marijuana prices could plummet 80 percent and the number of dope smokers would rise if marijuana is legalized in California if voters approve Prop. 19. [sfg.ly/99liDf](http://sfg.ly/99liDf).

Susan Manheimer, the president of the California Police Chiefs Association, is the San Mateo police chief, and prior to that rose through the ranks to captain at the San Francisco Police Department. For more information, go to [www.noonproposition19.com](http://www.noonproposition19.com).

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