

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION of CHIEFS of POLICE **global leadership in policing**

Message from IACP President Michael Carroll

Thursday, August 26, 2010

As IACP president, a police chief and a father, I feel it is important to bring a significant matter to your attention and ask for your help. The issue involves so-called medical marijuana, and the current movement to legalize marijuana in California. At this time, fourteen states and the District of Columbia have succeeded in passing a patchwork of laws for the use of so-called medical marijuana. This opened the floodgates for almost any type of ailment to be treated by this drug and in so doing created an almost impossible enforcement scenario for state and local law enforcement.

California was one of the first states to enact a medical marijuana law and now the state has presented Proposition 19, the Regulate, Control and Tax Cannabis Act of 2010, which seeks to legalize marijuana. As written, this legislation centralizes on the idea that cannabis legalization will generate revenue for the deficit burdened state as well as the idea that legalization would alleviate police drug responsibilities as marijuana enforcement would not be necessary. The proposed revenue created would be applied to neutralize healthcare costs and legalization would eliminate the apparent violence demonstrated daily by the drug trade with the added benefit of applying the remaining tax dollars to close budget gaps.

The faults, flaws and fallacies of the proposed arguments are numerous. According to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, alcohol related deaths claim 79,000 lives annually and tobacco related deaths claim 443,000 lives annually. Combine this information with the fact that the United States has one of the most robust and persistent illegal drug trades in the world, the question arises: why would we want to allow another drug to legally infect our lives and communities? Unfortunately, the voices publicized and marketed by the media, purported to represent law enforcement, encourages the public to support marijuana legalization measures. However, it has been my experience that the views presented by the IACP membership contradict the media, and most chiefs of police stand in opposition to this legislation.

The California Police Chiefs Association (CPCA) has been a leader in opposing the so-called medical marijuana initiative and now the legalization proposition its state faces. I applaud their efforts and would like to make a link to their website available for our membership to review their position and lend their support.

Additionally, I urge all police chiefs to review the literature and statistics; in particular, two articles which have been recently published by IACP members on the topic. Chief Susan Manheimer, President of the CPCA and Chief of San Mateo Police Department, was featured in the San Francisco Chronicle on Sunday, August 22, 2010, with an article entitled "Legalizing Marijuana is Bad for California." In it, she outlines the economic and social disadvantages to marijuana legalization, providing her standpoint as a citizen of California and as a local police leader. One perspective on the national level is the article published in the LA Times on Wednesday, August 25, 2010, entitled "Why California should just say no to Prop.19." A collaborative effort by five former directors as well as the current director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, including IACP Past President Lee P. Brown and IACP members Director Gil Kerlikowske and former Governor Bob Martinez, this article describes the reasons why this legislation is to be opposed by the law enforcement community and the American society at large.

The IACP has a long history of opposing drug legalization legislation. This legislative concern, with particular emphasis on the continuous efforts of CPCA, was discussed at length at our recent executive committee meeting in Philadelphia. The consensus was that the public is not being fully apprised of the negative effects that will occur if marijuana is legalized or if the patchwork medical marijuana legislation efforts continue. I encourage police chiefs, state police heads and sheriffs to speak out on the dangers of the movement toward legalization. Your voice can be critical in countering the "No Harm" message presented by the legalizers. To that end, I have tasked IACP staff to provide information on the website concerning this important issue. This information will be available by link from the main page of the IACP website, located at www.theiacp.org.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Carroll
President

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