

Mayor's Report on Recreational Marijuana Part 2

In last week's report, we looked at some of the possible impacts of legalizing recreational marijuana in the State of Arizona. In today's report, we can look at some of the tools we have available to minimize the impacts from the already established Medical Marijuana industry and the possible introduction of recreational marijuana to the state.

As we have seen demonstrated since the early 1960's, criminalization of marijuana has had a limited effect on controlling its usage. The fact that it has been illegal has had some effect on controlling the widespread use of the drug, but it has far from eradicated marijuana usage.

Some have suggested prohibition-style methods to keep marijuana out of certain municipalities. As we have all seen in the so-called dry counties in the south, folks will gladly drive 30 miles to get alcohol from a neighboring county, and oftentimes bring back enough for all of their friends. Although making it difficult to obtain a substance doesn't completely eradicate its usage, studies have shown that decreased access to a substance often results in decreased usage. Prohibition can reduce usage to a degree, but it still isn't the final answer.

The third tool we have available is education. As has been amply demonstrated through prevention science, when perception of risk goes down, usage tends to go up. When a substance is considered to be relatively harmless, people are more apt to try it to see what all the excitement is about. If they can see the demonstrated long-term effects, they are more inclined to choose a different course.

If we wish to protect our children and grandchildren from using drugs, the most effective method by far is that of effective parenting. By spending time with them and teaching them strong family values, we help to prepare them to live in a world that can be less than wonderful at times. We can teach them that making informed decisions, owning those decisions, and then living with the consequences helps them to become the leaders of tomorrow. We cannot always protect them, but we can teach them to protect themselves from the myriad temptations which will be thrust upon them when they venture out into the world. That way, no matter what becomes legal or socially acceptable- they will still be able to hold their course.

Chris Marley, Mayor of Chino Valley