

In February, I sent the following message to the Senate Judiciary Committee regarding the legalization of marijuana - S. 137. Obviously, the concerns are falling on deaf ears there. So, I am forwarding my opinion via e-mail to the House Judiciary Committee and hope for full vetting of concerns raised. I would appreciate this being included in the public input process.

In summary, I am against legalization. My reasons follow:

Public Safety -

I am extremely concerned about the potential increase of stoned drivers sharing the road. I regularly bicycle on rural VT roads. There is little margin for error for cyclists as seen by the fatalities in 2015. Legalization will not make the roads any safer. Law enforcement has expressed concern over this same road safety issue. How will a police officer be able to tell if someone is smoking a cigarette or a joint, impaired or straight?

The Children

There is no question that pot will be more available to minors after legalization. Children will easily find a person who is willing to buy for them. Regular use of the drug by children will undoubtedly impair their focus and ability to learn. Poor performance in school will affect them for life. The prospects for young individuals in VT to compete on the world stage will not be so favorable if they are regularly stoned.

The Hypocrisy

In his 2015 State of the State address, Governor Shumlin declared a "war" on drugs. Yet, a year later, he is supporting the legalization of pot- a drug. Seems hypocritical to me. (Just follow the money from the MPP.) Marijuana is indeed a gateway drug for those seeking a higher high. Will legalization of pot actually accomplish the 2015 goals to reduce drug use?

The State Economy

The intent of the proposed bill is to use resulting tax revenue to develop stronger programs to assist opiate addicts. Really? This is merely a smokescreen to obtain additional tax revenue to bail out a bankrupt state.

The state will need to "loan" millions of dollars to develop regulatory and enforcement programs before realizing a single penny from a tax on pot. Where else does this occur in state government? And, with all due respect, a select group of "farm to table" farmers see this as a get rich scheme. It's fairly transparent.

Perhaps, as identified by VT State Auditor's Office, the Appropriations Committee should revisit the land lease contracts that the State has with VT ski areas as a source of revenue rather than legalize pot.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion.

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