

**From:** Cheryl Joan Askegreen [<mailto:cheryl.joan@gmail.com>]

**Sent:** Thursday, March 31, 2016 1:15 PM

**Subject:** S. 241 is bad for Vermont Families

To the House Judiciary and Government Operations committees:

I believe that Bill S. 241 is bad for Vermont families. This bill has no foundation in a forward-thinking, long-term approach to legalization, and does not set up the state to prosper and thrive in the future. This bill does not benefit families, children, or schools, instead, it increases law enforcement and prosecution of Vermont citizens who do not conform to the very narrow definition of "legal" marijuana as defined in Bill S. 241.

Across the USA, states like Colorado and Oregon, Alaska and DC have implemented legalization that increases access for jobs, increases funding directly to schools and decreases arrests and incarcerations.

Oregon's laws put 40% of tax revenue collected going into the common school fund, 20% to mental health services, and only 15% to state police, and 10% for city law enforcement, and 5% to alcohol and drug abuse prevention. Oregon's lawmakers worked to create laws that do not unnecessarily stifle the burgeoning market, and the state has seen a decrease in arrests and an increase in new jobs created.

The state of Washington, along with a portion of collected taxes going directly to schools, has taken a conservative approach and allocated funds from tax revenues to short and long-term research on the state's marijuana policy, with multiple agencies participating in the research.

In Colorado, the ballot initiative mandated that the first \$40 million of excise tax revenue from marijuana each year goes directly towards schools for construction and maintenance. The state also gives 11, \$1 million grants to schools that go towards hiring nurses, social workers, and psychologists to help treat substance abuse among students. These grants to schools will increase to \$1.5 million within the coming years.

Vermont's Bill S. 241 only provides funding to schools for substance abuse education, with no revenue going to improving the schools and general education of our children, and most revenue directly going to the arrest and prosecution of citizens, even taking into account the increased need for public defenders. In fact, on page 3 of the bill, it states:

(6) Revenue generated by this act shall be used to provide for the implementation, administration, and enforcement of this chapter and to provide additional funding for State efforts on the prevention of substance abuse, treatment of substance abuse, and criminal justice efforts to combat the illegal drug trade and impaired driving. As used in this subdivision, "criminal justice AS PASSED BY SENATE S.241 2016 Page 4 of 89 VT LEG #314579 v.1 efforts" shall include efforts by both State and local criminal justice agencies, including law enforcement, prosecutors, public defenders, and the courts.

On page 11 of Bill S. 241 it states that:

(f)(d) Fifty percent of the civil penalties imposed by the Judicial Bureau for violations of this section shall be deposited in the Drug Task Force Special Fund, hereby created to be managed pursuant to 32 V.S.A. chapter 7, subchapter 5, and available to the Department of Public Safety for the funding of law enforcement officers on the Drug Task Force, except for a \$12.50 administrative charge for each violation which shall be deposited in the Court Technology Special Fund, in accordance with 13 V.S.A. § 7252.

Unlike the other states with legalized marijuana, Vermont is not looking ahead to the future of the state - the education of the children. In fact, when searching Bill S. 241, the word "education" is found only 15 times within the document, and the context of the word each and every time only relates to either drug-education or law enforcement education. In contrast, the word "enforcement" can be found 30 times, double the amount. With revenue directly funding law enforcement, prosecutors and public defenders, it can only be interpreted that if Bill S. 241 is passed, Vermont families will see an increase in prosecution of its mothers, fathers, aunts and uncles. Families will be broken apart, with children seeing an increase in their family members being incarcerated.

Please, members of the House Judiciary and Government Operations committees, do not sign Bill S. 241 into law. Vote NO to bill S. 241.

The State of Vermont should take the time to create laws that benefit the schools and the future citizens of our state. We should create laws that increase education and job opportunities, not increase prosecution and incarceration.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Cheryl Askegreen

--

<http://cheryljoan.net>