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Subject: Cannabis legalization claims

Dear Judiciary Committee,

I've been active in this important debate and was one of the people who organized 6 medical groups to endorse a statement against legalizing marijuana this year <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/jan/29/vermont-physicians-speak-out-against-legalizing-ma/>. I've testified twice to Senate committees and you may well have to endure my remarks as well.

As you begin hearings, I thought I would send you some (admittedly cheeky) responses to many of the claims being made by the pro-legalization lobby. While a bit sarcastic (as I've been talking about this for a while and growing increasingly irritated with some of the misinformation), I think these short responses make excellent points. I certainly don't intend any disrespect to anyone nor to this important process.

David

Legalizing marijuana will only regulate the use that already exists rather than increase it.

Nice try. By sales, Colorado increased recreational cannabis use by an astonishing 88% just between 2014 and 2015. Where does it end? Nobody knows. Is it important to know where it might level off? You better believe it.

We'll set aside some tax money from the marijuana sales to pay for substance abuse treatment.

Why don't we avoid creating a worse problem in the first place? History shows us that we never come close in recouping the societal costs of legal addicting substances through taxes. The promise of treatment dollars is a gimmick designed to make us feel less guilty about approving the bill.

Prohibition did not work for alcohol and does not work for marijuana.

This is not Chicago in the 1920s. The public and law-enforcement are not dying in the street because cannabis is illegal (but decriminalized). If they were, the police would be favoring legalization, and they're not.

Alcohol is legal. It's not fair.

The issue is not simply about fairness. I'm sure each legislator could identify new projects to fund that are as good if not better than what already exists. We also need to think about what

our state's capacity is to absorb more mental health and substance abuse problems. The answer is not much.

Don't listen to those scare mongering doctors.

Because they have such a conflict of interest in this issue unlike people who already use cannabis or those standing to profit financially from legalization?

But the research on the health risks of marijuana is FLAWED.

All medical research is flawed. The research for cannabis is as good if not better than many of the well accepted links between the consumption of many other things and health.

Kids can already get marijuana more easily than alcohol.

Hmmm. More easily than opening a kitchen cabinet? You might want to consider the possibility that so many teens arguing in favor of cannabis legalization might be a reason to move the other direction.

We will eliminate drug dealers in Vermont.

They are not going to become accountants. What they will do is sell other drugs and sell their cannabis more intensively to kids to whom it will still be illegal. What would be new are huge companies advertising their product and trying to expand their "markets."

Weed is legal in Europe and they don't have a problem.

Weed is decriminalized but not legal in some of Europe and they definitely have a problem. That's where a lot of the medical research on the dangers of cannabis comes from.

Much of the marijuana sales will come from out-of-state residents and not Vermonters.

Great. Getting hit by an intoxicated SUV driver from New Jersey hurts a lot less.

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