



LAW ENFORCEMENT AGAINST PROHIBITION

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April 1, 2013

Re: HB 3371

House Judiciary Committee;

My name is Shelley Fox-Loken. I am a retired Parole and Probation Officer/Correctional Counselor and a member of LEAP (Law Enforcement Against Prohibition). I represent this organization of more than 80,000 supporters, more than 5,000 of whom have law enforcement experience from around the world. Our group consists of police officers, judges, prosecutors, prison officials and supporters who know that HB 3371 is the kind of Bill that saves lives.

HB 3371 acknowledges that the adult use of cannabis for both medicinal and recreational use is not going away. Prohibition has been valiantly tried for over 70 years and has been completely and entirely unsuccessful in eradicating the use of marijuana. All of our communities have many members who use this substance with no adverse affects, and often with desirable ones. Criminalizing behaviors that have no direct negative impact on our society engenders disrespect for the law and those who enforce it, and squanders limited criminal justice resources that should be going to prevent real crime.

While working as an adult Parole and Probation Officer in Eugene in the 1980's and 90's, I repeatedly saw people in our Criminal Justice System who would never have ended up there had we adopted this type of Legislation decades ago. People who had never before or since committed any kind of offense that involved a real victim. These people were very much like you and me in that they grew up respecting the law. They would never consider stealing, cheating or assaulting another person. These people, these human beings, these citizens had done nothing more than use a substance to relax, unwind, treat pain and/or just have something pleasurable to enjoy occasionally.

You may not know it, but you likely have friends, family, neighbors and co-workers who use marijuana. If they were arrested and prosecuted under our current law, you would likely come to see that incarcerating these well-behaved, non-threatening people is a harmful approach. We know many high level government and business leaders have used marijuana at some time in their lives. Had they been caught and prosecuted they would never have been able to achieve their positions as their lives would have been ruined, not by the marijuana, but by being convicted of a felony offense. A great example of this is President Obama who admits he experimented with marijuana. Had he been caught, he would never have been elected to the Senate, let alone the Presidency. In fact, he might not have been able to get financial aid for college, so may not even have a degree today. Did using marijuana prevent him from accomplishing great feats? No. Would a criminal conviction? Yes.

The impact of a Felony drug conviction goes far beyond the commonly known problem of employment. These convictions result in devastating losses: children, careers, educational opportunities, housing, etc. No one's life should be turned into a nightmare only because they choose to use a substance that some people believe might be harmful...regardless of the scientific evidence.

Marijuana prohibition has failed. It is time for our State to, once again, help lead this nation to a more sane and humane legal system based on scientific evidence, and which the public supports. People ARE going to use this substance and, as we have seen for decades now, no laws will stop it. We can both regulate it and tax it (better keeping it out of the hands of minors) or we can continue to let the Black Market make the rules and reap the profits, while the tax payers foot the bill. It's time to make the right choice and I urge you to pass this Bill. Let's keep our marijuana using, adult population out of the Criminal Justice System and raise some much needed revenue for our wonderful State.

Thank you,
Shelley Fox-Loken