September 21, 2012

The Honorable Eric Holder
Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Holder:

As presidents of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), we feel compelled to speak out on the growing movement to legalize marijuana. The IACP and the NSA disagree with those organizations and individuals that purport to speak for law enforcement on the subject of marijuana legalization and we must speak out about this concerning issue.

We are especially concerned that a growing number of states—for example Colorado, Washington and Oregon—are considering proposals that would legalize marijuana or classify it as a "medical" substance. This is troubling because a number of states and localities that have relaxed their laws on marijuana have since expressed regret—as illegal activity and crime have increased in and around dispensaries and decriminalized zones.

Proponents mislead the public about the impact of marijuana legalization and assert that revenue from a marijuana tax will fund treatment, prevention, enforcement, and end drug-related violent crime. However, as you are well aware, the concept of marijuana legalization providing tax dollars to remedy all societal ills is simply not in touch with reality. Additionally, every year, the use and abuse of narcotics kill tens of thousands of Americans and condemn countless others to a life of addiction, unemployment, and incarceration. And all too often these lives start with our nation's youth who utilize marijuana as a gateway drug.

We know you agree that legalizing marijuana will not make life better for our citizens; ease the level of crime and violence in our communities; or reduce the threat faced by law enforcement officers. To suggest otherwise ignores the reality and severity of this problem. Unfortunately, legalization proponents, including some who claim to speak for the law enforcement community, are providing the public with unrealistic promises and misleading claims.

You have spoken out against marijuana legalization before—against California's Proposition 19—and we ask that you speak out again. Our country needs your leadership on this issue and needs to hear that you agree that those spreading proposals are harmful to our country.

Together, we can fight the dangers of these false claims and work towards a brighter and drug-free future.

Sincerely,

Chief Walter A. McNeil
President, IACP

Sheriff Larry Amerson
President, NSA