

Three states are about to vote on whether to legalize the production, trafficking, and distribution of marijuana. Millions of dollars have been devoted to blinding voters to the facts:

- **Today's marijuana is a greater cause of treatment need than all other illegal drugs combined.** (2011, *National Survey of Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)*--  
<http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2011SummNatFindDetTables/Index.aspx>)
- **The most recent federal data indicates that 23% of all marijuana users need treatment.** (2011, *NSDUH*)
- **Last year over 2.5 million Americans over the age of 12 started using marijuana--now more than the number that started using tobacco.** (2011, *NSDUH*)
- **Today more teens already use marijuana than smoke cigarettes.** (2011, *Monitoring the Future*--cited in "Cannabis smoking 'permanently lowers IQ,'" *The Telegraph*, July 27, 2012--  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/9426205/Cannabis-smoking-permanently-lowers-IQ.html>)

Over the summer the National Academy of Sciences published a new study that should be in each voter's mind this fall:

**teens who smoke marijuana persistently permanently lowered their IQ as adults by an average of 8 points and were also more likely to have attention and memory problems in later life.** ("Cannabis smoking 'permanently lowers IQ,'" *The Telegraph*, July 27, 2012--<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/9426205/Cannabis-smoking-permanently-lowers-IQ.html>)

Legalizing and normalizing marijuana will be a public health disaster. Countries who have done this--the Netherlands, and Great Britain, for example--have been trying to reverse course and learned it much easier to make this problem worse than to repair the damage.

Every past director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy--in both Democratic and Republican Administrations--have written to President Obama asking him and his senior health, law enforcement, and diplomatic officials to speak out about this threat before the election.

The silence of the President and our national health and safety leaders can too easily be taken as downplaying the risks and thereby supporting the legalization of marijuana. We ask the President to take just a few minutes and speak out about this dangerous threat. President Obama's leadership in this issue will save lives.

--Remarks by John P. Walters, former Director of National Drug Control Policy (2001-2009).