

RESOLUTION FOR THE ARIZONA DEMOCRATIC PARTY TO SUPPORT THE 'SAFER
ARIZONA CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

Whereas, according to national data compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in 2012, “Nationwide, law enforcement made an estimated 12,196,959 arrests in 2012.” Of which, “The highest number of arrests were for drug abuse violations (estimated at 1,552,432 arrests);”
<http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2012/crime-in-the-u.s.-2012/persons-arrested/persons-arrested>

and

Whereas, according to the same FBI report, 42.4 percent (or 658,231) of those drug abuse violation arrests were specifically for possession of marijuana;

and

Whereas, according to the FBI report, in Arizona in 2012, there were 27,273 arrests for drug abuse violations;

and

Whereas, according to data compiled by/at <http://www.whosarrested.com/arizona/maricopa-county/phoenix/mcso>, in Maricopa County, topping the list of most frequent criminal charges filed has consistently been “Drug paraphernalia – possession/use;” with “marijuana possession/use” consistently the fifth most frequent charge;

and

Whereas, Arizona Revised Statutes §13-3405 A.1 prohibits the possession or use of any amount of marijuana and that a violation for even the smallest amount (any amount less than two pounds possessed not for sale) is a (Class 6) felony;
<http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/ars/13/03405.htm&Title=13&DocType=ARS>

and

Whereas, the history of the War on Drugs in America over the last four decades has demonstrated clearly and emphatically that prohibition of marijuana does not and has not diminished demand for and therefore the illicit street markets for marijuana;
<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/09/04/marijuana-drug-use-survey/2760061/>
and <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/mjinitiation/chapter3.htm>

and

Whereas, since inception of the War on Drugs (declared by President Richard M. Nixon in 1971 when he signed the Controlled Substances Act into law), the market for marijuana has existed, until the advent of Medical Marijuana laws in various of the 50 states, exclusively “on the streets;”
http://www.rand.org/pubs/external_publications/EP201100289.html

and

Whereas, medical literature increasingly in the last several years has explored alternatives to criminal prohibition, including in the British Medical Journal, which cites “There is a way that the UK government could more than halve the prison population, prevent burglaries and prostitution, rip the heart out of organised crime, and free up millions of hours of police time. Yet politicians, terrified of the rightwing press, would never dare to suggest the legalisation, regulation, and control of the drugs market, even though it could save lives and bring an end to the needless criminalisation of some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Even downgrading cannabis—a tiny step in the right direction—is now being reconsidered.” *BMJ 2007; 335 doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.39360.489132.AD> (Published 8 November 2007)*

and

Whereas, economic development potential, from production of industrial hemp alone, is enormous (in 2013, after a period of more than 50 years, a Colorado farmer/entrepreneur raised the first US commercial crop of this tremendously versatile agricultural commodity; hundreds, if not thousands of products are made in the US from imported hemp); hemp production still currently violates federal law; <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/hemp-incs-industrial-hemp-crop-in-northwest-china-produces-large-harvest-of-seeds-and-fiber-2013-12-03>

and

Whereas, the impact of a dramatic reduction in arrests will result in enormously lowered operating (taxpayer) costs to Arizona city, county and state government for law enforcement, court operations and correctional/prison facilities; <http://www.prohibitioncosts.org/mironreport/>

and

Whereas, the country of Portugal decriminalized drug possession and use in the year 2000 and has since treated the problem as a public health concern, rather than of criminal justice. Now more than a dozen years into the experiment, it is widely considered a successful strategy, lowering the cost of government without causing increases in drug addiction rates or other crimes. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/evaluating-drug-decriminalization-in-portugal-12-years-later-a-891060.html> http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tony-newman/portugal-drug-laws_b_891703.html

and

Whereas, public opinion polling conducted by Arizona based Behavior Research Center in May 2013 showed “Now it appears that a majority (56%) also favor legalizing possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use... it is men (62%) rather than women (50%) that are the most supportive of marijuana legalization, but defelonization also enjoys majority support in all age groups, across all counties and among both Democrats and Independent voters. Indeed, Independent voters are the most supportive at a very strong 72 percent, with only one in five opposed.” “**Support drops among Republicans and political conservatives**, yet it is clear that they are not of one mind on the issue. Among registered Republicans, 41 percent favor defelonization of marijuana while 56 percent oppose. Among political conservatives, 35 percent favor defelonization for personal use, but 58 percent remain in opposition. The **opposition of conservatives is more than offset by the support among political moderates (67 %) and political liberals (75%)**. And while a majority in all age groups support

legalizing simple possession of a small amount of marijuana, it is clear that voters under 54 years of age are the **most likely** age groups **to carry this view into future elections**.

“It is perhaps ironic that as support for same-sex marriage and defelonization of marijuana have long been albatrosses which conservative candidates could hang around the necks of some of their moderate or liberal challengers, **it now appears that hard opposition to** gay marriage and perhaps even to **marijuana liberalization** could become issues **moderates and liberals can use against their conservative opponents...**; <http://www.brcpolls.com/13/RMP%202013-II-08.pdf> [There does not appear to have been any factor present itself to Arizona voters to decrease support for marijuana legalization since this survey.] (Gallup polling in October 2013 shows strong support for legalization; a December poll by Republican research firm Susquehanna Polling and Research suggests Arizonans oppose legalization). According to Gallup, the bottom line is “It has been a long path toward majority acceptance of marijuana over the past 44 years, but Americans' **support for legalization accelerated as the new millennium began.**” <http://www.gallup.com/poll/165539/first-time-americans-favor-legalizing-marijuana.aspx>

and

Whereas, wherever volunteers have offered the initiative petition for registered voters to sign, the response has been consistently supportive and enthusiastic;

and

Whereas, a citizens initiative to legalize marijuana on the **2014** general election ballot has the potential to drive young adult voter turnout, thereby increasing the chances of electing our Democratic statewide office candidates, an increasing number of Democratic state lawmakers and increasing the odds for re-electing the Democratic members of our Congressional delegation who represent competitive districts; (see the link above from brcpolls.com)

and

Whereas, legalization of marijuana will undercut illicit (street) markets thereby decimating violent drug cartels that have persistently (and too often successfully) sought methods and means to violate America's and especially Arizona's border with Mexico;

and

Whereas, young adults bear the brunt of the burden under marijuana prohibition (with 18-29 year olds facing 52 percent of the drug arrests in 2012 nationwide), this issue has the potential to engage the next generation of civic leaders, bringing them into the Democratic Party and energizing the future of our state for decades to come; <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2012/crime-in-the-u.s.-2012/tables/38tabledatadecoverviewpdf>

Therefore, the Arizona Democratic Party resolves to support the **Safer Arizona citizens' initiative** <http://www.azsos.gov/election/2014/general/ballotmeasuretext/C-04-2014.pdf>, using our state, county and legislative district organizations to demonstrate the true nature of a citizen initiative to change our state's laws, public policy and to demonstrate that Democratic Precinct Committeemen and women, activists and elected officials throughout Arizona strongly stand for the civil liberties of Arizonans and for sound drug abuse policy.