

Persuasive Policy Memo

I am going to discuss the United States public policy in regards to the war on drugs. The reason why it is important for the United States to change its current drug policy is because of the negative effects that this policy has on our society.

The United States public policy in regards to the war on drugs is a failed policy. This is because, since its inception, there has been no decrease in the amount of illegal drugs being produced and sold within our borders. According to a report by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), approximately \$10 billion is spent annually by state and local governments for police officers, prosecutors, judges, prison guards, probation officers, and other criminal justice system personnel involved in drug enforcement efforts (ONDCP, 1998). Furthermore, ONDCP estimates that more than half of these costs are associated with enforcing marijuana laws alone. This fact shows that we have spent billions of dollars over the past 20 years enforcing a failed policy. This money could have been used for other more productive purposes. For example, if we had used this money to educate our children about drugs and how they affect their lives, we would have a much healthier society today.

The current drug policies have created a very negative impact on our society. The majority of these negative impacts are associated with incarceration rates for non-violent offenders and with racial discrimination against minorities and low-income communities. According to ONDCP statistics from 1997 there were more than 1 million arrests related to drug offenses nationwide. This means that there were 1 million people who had their rights taken away from them because they made a mistake or committed an offense against our government's laws related to drugs. It does not matter if these people were making personal choices or if they were addicted; what matters is that we have incarcerated one million people who may not have

been criminals at all if we had used different methods or policies for dealing with drugs in our country.

Another negative impact of the current drug policies is that they are a major contributor to racial discrimination against minorities and low-income communities. According to ONDCP statistics from 1997, African Americans represent 12% of the total population, but they represent 27% of those arrested for drug offenses. Furthermore, Hispanics represent 9% of the total population, but they represent 16% of those arrested for drug offenses. The fact that minorities are disproportionately represented in these statistics shows that these policies are unfairly discriminating against minorities and low-income communities. The war on drugs has created a system where certain people are treated differently than others based on their race or economic status. This is a form of oppression which must be eliminated immediately if we want to create a fair society for all people.

A solution to this problem is to implement a more realistic drug policy. The legalization of marijuana and other drugs that have less harmful effects on society would create a new way for the government to deal with drugs in our country. If we legalize these drugs, then they will be regulated by the government like alcohol and tobacco are today. This will make it easier for the government to control who can buy and sell these drugs, how much they can buy or sell, and what type of penalties should be enforced if someone violates these rules. The legalization of marijuana alone would save our country \$8 billion per year (Cohen, 1995). This is because we would no longer have to spend billions of dollars enforcing marijuana laws. Furthermore, we could use this money to educate our children about the dangers of drug use so that they can make better decisions when it comes to their health and well-being. We need to educate our children

about the dangers of drugs and we need to provide resources for those who want to get off drugs.
If we can do these things, then we will have a much healthier society.

Cohen P. et al. Mutual attachment, personality, and drug use: pathways from childhood to young adulthood. *Genet Soc Gen Psychol Monogr.* 1998 Nov;124(4):492-510. PMID: 9848267.