Decriminalization of Marijuana: Is the Grass Really Greener on the Other Side?

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Abstract

This research study will examine the possible effects of marijuana legalization on the American economy. The population that the study will focus on, will be the individual economies between each state that have currently legalized recreational marijuana (Colorado, Washington, and Oregon), and extrapolate that information to apply to Idaho as a potential source of additional income. The study will also assess the different perceptions regarding the legalization of marijuana between students of Lewis-Clark State College, and the Idaho legislature.
Decriminalization of Marijuana: Is the Grass Really Greener on the Other Side?

Marijuana has been the topic of discussion for many decades. From the Federal Drug Act of 1976, to Colorado and Washington legalizing the drug on their own, the Schedule I narcotic is becoming more accepted within our society. While some may view the decriminalization of marijuana as the first step towards a drug addicted society, many individuals including politicians are focusing on the financial effects of the transition. One side fears that the drug will not promote the well-being of society and lead to problems such as crime and homelessness, while the other side of the spectrum believes that taxing the drug can bring in enough revenue to the state that can be used for social programs and to create more jobs. Oregon alone has brought in an estimated $436 million in revenue per year (Crawford, 2014, p. 128), but many believe that not every state will have the same outcome if they were to follow suit.

This movement alone could have the biggest potential effect of our generation against our current criminal justice system. Overpopulation is a major problem within our prison systems, yet according to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, 48.8% are doing time for non-violent drug crimes (“Offenses,” n.d.). If marijuana were to be rescheduled and decriminalized, one could theorize that the overpopulation problem within the prisons would reduce significantly.

Marijuana is considered among humanity’s oldest cultivated crops. It dates back as far as 12,000 years, and is found in nutrient dump sites of prehistoric hunters and gatherers. Burned cannabis seeds have been found in burial mounds in Siberia, dating back to 3,000 BC. The Chinese use cannabis in a different form, and this form is referred to as hemp. This is a product that their culture uses widely, to make rope, clothing, sails, bowstrings and many more. Cannabis has also been used as an anesthetic dating back to 4000 BC. (Warf, 2014, p. 419). Although marijuana has been around for several thousands of years, the drug has recently gained the political spotlight during the last few decades.
In 2012, Colorado voters approved Amendment 64 to their state constitution. This amendment approved “personal use and regulation of marijuana” for individuals over the age of 21, and effectively regulating marijuana in a way that is similar to alcohol. This was the result of a long effort that started with the drug being used for medicinal purposes. An individual can become a marijuana patient by demonstrating a condition that might benefit from the medicinal use of marijuana (Kamin, 2012, p. 148). In 2009 Denver, Colorado, had more marijuana dispensaries than Starbucks. It was also during this time that the number of medical patients from 2009 to May 2010 increased by about 10 times. During this 15 month period, the number of registered marijuana users grew from 10,000 to over 100,000 (p. 149).

With Amendment 64 relating to the recreational use of marijuana, came a huge conflict between local, state, and federal policies. As former Attorney General Eric Holder once stated referring to Proposition 19 in California that would permit medicinal and recreational use of marijuana, “Proposition 19 would greatly complicate federal drug enforcement efforts to the detriment of our citizens.” Colorado was legalizing the drug on the state level, but on the federal level it was still deemed against the law (Kamin, 2012, p. 157).

On the local and state level within Colorado, there are definitely some discrepancies regarding marijuana use. Municipalities and counties are both free to enact zoning restrictions on the sale of marijuana. This includes banning the drug completely. The Colorado Constitution prohibits the punishment of those using marijuana for medical purposes, but there will still be many places within the state where marijuana cannot be lawfully purchased or sold (Kamin, 2012, p. 162). The marijuana industry within Colorado employs thousands of people, and takes in hundreds of millions in revenue.

In order to sell marijuana in Washington, qualified individuals must obtain a producer’s license to grow or cultivate; a processor’s license to process, package and label the drug; or a
retail license to sell marijuana to the public. In the state of Washington, they started by imposing an excise tax of 25% to each sale of marijuana that happens within their system. This includes the trade from producer to processor, from processor to retailer, and from retailer to consumer. This high tax of the commodity is a trend that has peaked the interests of several states that have yet to do so.

As of 2015 there are now 23 states and also Washington DC that have legalized medical marijuana. State officials lack the constitutional authority to override federal law, while federal officials lack the resources necessary to override conflicting state law. This has created an utmost standstill, where one level of government must cave in to the other for anything to be done (Marijuana, 2014, p. 2).

With the slight possession of marijuana, under federal law, an individual could be targeted with a misdemeanor. This punishment can result up to one year in imprisonment and a minimum fine of $1,000. If one was to distribute marijuana, or possess the drug with the intention of distribution, they can be punished from five years to life in prison. In some circumstances, forfeiture may be used on the person’s property. The only property that can be used in this case, would be any property that involved the direct and indirect proceeds of the illegal activity (Marijuana, 2014, p. 3).

Several issues on the acceptance of marijuana are due to the classification of the drug itself. Many individuals do not accept marijuana because it is labeled as a Schedule I narcotic. These individuals believe that the drug is listed there for a reason, even though the drug was given its classification several decades ago. Under its current federal classification, it is a felony to grow, sell, or even possess the drug in the United States. Therefore, federal authorities may

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confiscate any property that is used to grow or sell marijuana through civil or criminal forfeiture. Marijuana users if caught, could lose their jobs, their homes, their right to vote, and even their right to possess a firearm. Many state officials are also against this outdated classification, and have taken the measures to make marijuana legal recreationally.

The Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution states that federal statutes, federal regulations, and treaties reign power over individual decisions of the state. The only way to change this is through the act of preemption from Congress. So far, any attempts have been made unsuccessful. While more states have opted into having medicinal marijuana compared to the drug being used recreationally, the overlapping issues between each level of government is still apparent.

With marijuana legislation constantly changing for each individual state, there can be some issues varying between each state. An example of this could be the possibility of having legally produced marijuana, being illegally exported to other states and areas. This has created several illegal job opportunities for drug smugglers involved in the industry (Caulkins & Bond, 2012). This problem could potentially place a downward pressure on outside prices, and could create an export-based tax revenue for the state that has legalized the production of the drug. With the decrease of marijuana prices through an increase of availability, this could lead to an increase in the use of the drug throughout the entire country (p. 29).

In 2012 smugglers were able to acquire high end marijuana in California at prices ranging anywhere from $300 per pound that is placed at the lower end of the production scale, and that is also untaxed. On the high end of the production scale along with sales tax, smugglers could expect to receive this marijuana for around $1,350 along with the $50 sales tax (Caulkins & Bond, 2012, p. 30). At these prices to weight ratios, one could illegally transport these drugs with very low fuel and labor costs.
One reason smugglers can make a decent amount of money is because of the risk involved. One could expect to make anywhere from $325 to $475 per pound per 1,000 miles traveled north of the Mexican border (Caulkins & Bond, 2012). Lowering the prices of marijuana can lead to smugglers carrying bigger loads on a single trip. The study found that marijuana that is illegally transported from legal production, would undercut current marijuana prices in the lower 48 states. If the drug was legally capable of being produced in a massive state near the border like California, the prices of the drug and the price of smuggling would go down due to competition (p. 32). These consequences could lead to an increase of illegal transportation of the drug, and also an increase in the widespread availability of the drug itself. Through the law of supply and demand, one state’s decision to legalize produce marijuana could create many consequences for the country as a whole.

Oregon has already stepped its feet into uncharted waters when it comes to legal recreational marijuana. It is estimated that around 550,000 adult Oregonians use marijuana each year (Crawford, 2014). This study conducted by Crawford investigated both users and producers of marijuana in the state of Oregon. The data was collected through the use of a respondent-driven survey. The data collected in this study indicates that the average user consumes around 6.75 ounces per year, where the average reported price sits at $177 per ounce. This equates the internal Oregon marijuana market to have an estimated value of $436 million in revenue per year (p. 128).

When it comes to demand, 10.27% of individuals in Oregon, 26 or older have used marijuana within the last year, 6.58% used in the last month. For the 18-25 age group, 36.96% used in the last year and 21.9% in the last month (Crawford, 2014, p. 129). Between all Oregonians, this creates the monthly demand for marijuana to be set at 4,432,322 grams, or 53,187,864 grams per year. Using the demand and multiplying this number by the average price
per gram at $177, the total amount of marijuana demanded in Oregon for 2012 was approximately $361 million (p. 130). Nearly 7 percent of illegal users grow marijuana without a license from the state. Three fourths of these growers are under 26 years old and are considered to be “heavy users” (p. 131). Marijuana is an extremely profitable industry whether it be a commodity that is taxed, or if it remains as a black market good. With the rise of drug smuggling and the price of the drug itself, many are leaning more towards their own growing ventures in the safety of their own homes.

Some individuals get into the growing business simply because they wanted to avoid the cost of a marijuana purchase (Boylstein & Maggard, 2013). Study participants were found in the natural settings of use, and the information was gathered from a one-on-one meeting at their home. This method of finding participants resulted in a snowball effect that lead to other participants, including the general manager of a horticulture store (p. 57). Ranging $300-$400 an ounce on the black market, young individuals have decided that it would be cheaper to purchase seeds online to grow themselves. Often failing on their first attempts, these individuals keep trying to perfect their drug for personal usage. This commitment then turns into a business venture into the underground marijuana market (p. 61).

These people are individuals with college degrees, and in some instances well-paying professions. With two to twenty plants, bringing in anywhere ranging from $20,000 to $100,000, some growers are in it for monetary gain and do not even use the drug themselves (Boylstein & Maggard, 2013, p. 59). Others are in the business as more of a hobby in their basement, and see themselves as amateur horticulturists (p. 63).

Often these basement hobbies sprout while in college, then develop into a side business that can produce some individuals a little “bonus money.” According to the study and the interviews within, these small scale businesses would only sell to known individuals and close
friends in order to minimize the risk of being on the radar for law enforcement. These individuals do not look at this as source of sole income, but more as a leisure activity that is voluntary and enjoyable (Boylstein & Maggard, 2013, p. 63). Unfortunately, this enjoyment of the drug can be partaken at a young age.

Among youths, marijuana has been at a 30 year high among high school seniors. The national youth survey indicates that marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug among teens in the United States (Friese & Grube, 2013). The numbers alone show that this habit can be developed at an early age. Out of 17,482 Montana youth who participated in this study, those who have used marijuana reported doing the drug on 19.5 occasions (Friese & Grube, 2013). More than half of the lifetime users reported using the drug 8 times on average within the past 30 days. On average, lifetime users of marijuana were 13.8 years old the first time they did the drug (p. 35). The study also found that when the number of medical marijuana cards increased, so did the ease of access of marijuana (p. 37).

These findings by Friese & Grube (2013), shows the paradigm of increasing tolerance towards the use of recreational marijuana with the generation to come. The study showed a positive correlation between participants who voted in favor of Measure 148, which legalized recreational marijuana, and shows an increase in acceptance of the drug both medicinally and recreationally. With the all-time rise of its general acceptance, and the use of the drug medicinally, access to the drug is easier than ever before for our future youth especially when it comes to the rising trend of legalization between several states. Many are receiving career-destroying drug convictions, even before they graduate high school.

Every nationwide public opinion poll on legalizing medical marijuana favored the use of medical marijuana by seriously ill patients when recommended by a doctor (Rubens, 2014). In a random telephone survey by CBS News to 1,033 adults in 2011, 77% of people stated that they
favor legalizing marijuana for medical uses. Only 17% opposed against the idea, while 6% could not care either way. A vast majority also stated that although they strongly oppose the drug recreationally and consider it a dangerous narcotic, they can still find themselves in the opinion for favoring it medicinally. In 2009, a telephone survey in California found that 80% of people supported the use of medical marijuana. This shows that the drug norms are leaning towards the acceptance of medical marijuana usage. This acceptance may have been developed through only the most recent decades, but the history of the drug itself goes on for many centuries (p. 126).

While many may support the use of medical marijuana, there is a large level of discretion for going through with an arrest for the drug on the streets. White and Holman (2012) assume that this perception comes from the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937. This act prohibited the use of marijuana, largely because at the time the general population believed that the use of marijuana can lead up to an unexpected criminal, who would have decided against killing another if he had not used the drug beforehand. The act was also set in stone because marijuana was seen to have caused criminal behavior from minorities, and then was used to try and corrupt the white youth (White & Holman, 2012, p. 78).

Kenneth White and Mirya Holman (2012), examined whether the theory of non-white ethnic groups are more likely to be arrested for a marijuana offense than whites are in the state of California. They performed their research by analyzing data that was compiled from 2000 to 2008 by the California Justice Department’s Criminal Justice Statistics Center (p. 82).

The study found that whites are underrepresented in the arrest pool, making up 39% of the arrests, but 44% of California residents. Hispanics are at an equal percentage of the arrested population, totaling up to 35% of those being arrested and making up 35% of the general population of California. The African American population on the other hand, was greatly overrepresented in the arrested population making up 21% of those arrested for marijuana crimes.
and making up for only 6% of the population of California (White & Holman, 2012, p. 83).

The researchers also found that on average, there are 3.4 marijuana arrest per 1,000 residents during this time frame, however, for African Americans, the average marijuana arrest rate was 6.1 per 1,000, compared to 1.6 and 1.8 per 1,000 for the Whites and Hispanics respectively (White & Holman, 2012, p. 84).

With the war on drugs going on for the last three decades, urban African American communities have suffered as a whole. Beginning in the 1990s, the average White arrest rate was 836 per 100,000, where African Americans arrest rates were 2,447 per 100,000 (Thornhill, 2011, p. 123). In the year 2008, African Americans were still being arrested for drug offenses at almost 3 times as much compared to rate of those that are White. What makes this concept stand out even more is that there is also strong evidence that Whites are just as likely to use and sell drugs (Thornhill, 2011). If marijuana was to be legalized, one might assume that the drug related arrests for the urban African Americans would go down, therefore these types of urban communities must support this proposal. The reality is that African Americans within the US, are in less favor of legalization compared to those of the White community. With the White community there has been a 100% increase in acceptance going from 18.3% to 36.8%. Within the Black community this acceptance has only grown from 22% to 30% from 1986 to 2006 (p. 111). This is largely because of the Blacks becoming fed up with the current draconian law enforcement practices that happen within their communities (p. 129). This social issue has resulted in many states jumping on the recreational bandwagon.

Public opinion has favored the use of medical marijuana, yet the drug remains a Schedule I narcotic. This classification by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration as the most dangerous of all the drug schedules, deemed as a category of drugs with, “no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse.” (Drug Scheduling, (n.d.)). The future of the
drug remains unknown, but one certainty is that there must be a collaboration between both scientific and political forces to take it anywhere (p. 123).

The research about medical marijuana has been previously hindered by the politics of our nation. The first step that must be taken is to gather up the massive funding and support necessary for a specific study on recreational marijuana. Once these initial studies are made, the data should then be used to educate political leaders and any individual about the effectiveness or the drawbacks of marijuana.

The literature reveals that our country is heading in the direction of a massive transition regarding marijuana legislation. Washington, Oregon, and Colorado, have legalized marijuana recreationally, and are experiencing a new legal industry that brings in an extraneous amount of tax revenue. These states decided to make the jump, largely because of the developing acceptance of the drug. New jobs are being made, but the direction of the entire country is hard to predict due, in part, to the lack of research of the drug and the funding necessary to conduct more studies regarding marijuana and it’s actual health effects on people.

Based on the previous research, this study will examine two questions. (1) How much estimated tax revenue can be made in Idaho from the legalization of marijuana and, (2) What is the level of support of legalized marijuana by a sample of Lewis-Clark State College students, compared to the view of the Idaho legislature?

Method

Purpose

The intent of this research is to examine the view of both Idaho citizens and the state legislature on legalizing marijuana, and on how much tax revenue Idaho could potentially bring in if recreational marijuana was legalized within the state.
Participants & Sampling Procedures

The population studied included a member of the Idaho legislature, and several students of Lewis-Clark State College. Surveys were distributed in several classes on campus, and an interview with the member of the Idaho legislature was conducted.

Research Design

Quantitative research will be used to compare the differences between the acceptance of marijuana between students of Lewis-Clark State College, and those of the Idaho legislature, and to analyze the performance of each state after the decriminalization of marijuana. To determine this level of performance, public records from the Department of Revenue from each state were analyzed in order to come up with a precise number on how much taxes this drug can bring in.

Data Collections

A survey was used to collect data from students of Lewis-Clark State College. The data collection of state legislator(s) will be used through the use of an interview.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are listed inside of the IRB Application.

Bias

The only trace of possible bias could come from the sample itself. Only including one member of the Idaho legislature, can be biased towards other legislators who view the topic differently. Surveying a small sample of students and not every college student in the United States, could be biased because of the small population that this study consists of.

Assumptions

Honest answers from all participants will be assumed for this study during the interview process. Obtaining financial records from state institutions on the tax revenue generated by
marijuana, leads to the assumption that these records are true and credible.

**Limitations**

A major limitation on this study is from the small amount being sampled, in such small geographical location. Surveying only a small sample of students of Lewis-Clark State College is a limitation because in the perfect study every student in every college within the entire United States would be included in the survey process, along with every state legislator. One last limitation is having only one semester to complete this study, where a longer timeframe could include more individuals being sampled and more financial records being collected.

**Results**

In 2012, Washington passed Initiative 502, which was a marijuana reform dealing with recreational marijuana. In order to legally be in the business, there are many different types of licenses that people in the industry must receive. Washington divides the taxation of marijuana into three different phases: marijuana processor, marijuana retailer, and marijuana producer.

Each license has an application fee currently set at $266. In addition, there is also a $1,062 renewal fee for each individual license. According I-502, having all three licenses is not permitted in Washington. Under this initiative, a licensee is allowed to possess both a producer and processor license at the same time. A processor and/or producer cannot be a retailer (Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board, 2015).

Where the former excise tax structure in Washington was 25 percent from the marijuana producer, 25 percent from producer to processor, and 25 percent from processor to retailer, under the new law, 2E2SHB 2136, effective July 1, 2015, the tax focuses primarily on the retail customer. Under the new law, instead of being taxed each level at an equal amount, the tax can increase to as high as 37 percent for every retail transaction to the customer. This law makes the tax no longer levied on the producers, processors, and retailers (WADOR (A) 2015). This high
percentage of tax, has resulted in a successful cash flow for the state of Washington. Between 2014 and 2015 the taxes from recreational marijuana started flowing in exponentially after each month. As you can see from the chart below, recreational marijuana taxable income grew over 1200% from July 2014 to July 2015, and increased by 122% between July 2015 and October 2015 (WADOR (B), 2015).

Over that same year, medical marijuana tax revenue in Washington nearly doubled from July 2014, to December 2014, while steadily declining shortly thereafter once recreational marijuana taxes started to accumulate. The comparison between these two shows that while recreational marijuana is growing substantially over the years, medical marijuana has shown only a slight growth during the initial stages, and has also started to decline with the stabilization of the recreational marijuana economy. This is predictable because the market for medical marijuana is less needed once marijuana users can readily get the drug recreationally (WADOR (C), 2015).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WA - Recreational</th>
<th>WA - Medical</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>July, 2014</td>
<td>$154,570</td>
<td>$486,081</td>
<td>$6,027,901</td>
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<td>December, 2014</td>
<td>$655,652</td>
<td>$848,712</td>
<td>$7,312,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July, 2015</td>
<td>$1,877,689</td>
<td>$449,137</td>
<td>$11,608,684</td>
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<tr>
<td>October, 2015</td>
<td>$2,290,119</td>
<td>$340,932</td>
<td>$10,068,491</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Colorado is deemed as the king when it comes to marijuana taxation. Although the marijuana market has stabilized, the state of Colorado had initial troubles when legislation switched over in favor for legalizing recreational marijuana. In July 2013, Colorado brought in $469,590 additional tax revenue because of Amendment 64. This state amendment made the private use, growing, and limited possession of marijuana legal. As shown in the chart, exactly a
year later in 2014, tax revenue grew to $6,027,901 in July alone (DORCO (A), 2016). The slow growth in the first stages of the process could have been the results from the difficulties in getting the businesses going, and obtaining proper licenses.

The main portion of Colorado’s tax revenue success comes from Colorado’s tax structure on marijuana itself. The retail excise tax in Colorado for marijuana is at a feasible 15% which is included in the final price of the product, where the sales tax on only marijuana is set at a 10% rate, on top of these two taxes there is also a 2.9% state sales tax that is charged during the time of the purchase (DORCO (B), 2016). Compared to Washington’s tax structure that levies the 37 percent tax primarily on the retail customer, Washington is not the leader in marijuana tax revenue mainly because of the Washington state law, 2E2SHB 2136, was passed less than a year ago (WADOR (A), 2015). The Washington marijuana economy has simply had not enough time to stabilize in the same sense as Colorado. With marijuana taxation being higher in Washington, one could foresee an exponential amount of growth after this stabilization, and if the state was to develop at the same rate as Colorado, this stabilization should come within 2-3 years to get past...
the initial steps of new businesses obtaining proper licenses and gaining momentum with sales.

Due to the population of each state, one could estimate the marijuana tax revenue of Washington growing even higher than Colorado in the next few years. The Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration conducts an annual study on the prevalence of marijuana use in each state. According to SAMHSA, there were 909,000 people who admitted to using marijuana in Colorado during the year 2013, compared to 1,105,000 people in Washington and 649,000 people in Oregon (SAMHSA, CO, OR, WA).

To accurately approximate how much tax revenue could potentially be made if Idaho was to legalize recreational marijuana, one must first take a look at statistics for the population of the entirety of the state. According to the Idaho Census, in 2014 the population of Idaho was approximately 1,634,464 people. Of this number, 73.6% of the overall population or 1,202,965 people are adults, age 18 and over (Idaho, 2014). We can then utilize this information along with the annual data collected by SAMHSA, to approximate the prevalence of Idaho marijuana use.

SAMHSA reports the number of adult marijuana users in Idaho to be 132,000 in 2014 (SAMHSA, ID). Dividing that number by the total number of Idaho adults (1,202,965), concludes that about 11% of Idaho adults use marijuana. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the national average of marijuana users that have reported using marijuana in the last year is very similar to Idaho, sitting at 10.1% (National, 2016).

Using information of the current prices of marijuana, along with the number of adult marijuana users within the state of Idaho, we can estimate how much revenue can be made if the state was to legalize recreational marijuana. According to the Crawford study analyzed within the article review, in Oregon the average marijuana user consumes around 6.75 ounces of the drug per year. The average price of marijuana in Oregon, is $177 per ounce which is also similar nationwide (Crawford, 2014, p. 128). With the amount one consumes on average for an entire
year, along with the price per ounce, the average marijuana user spends around $1,195 a year for the drug.

We can use the same formula for the adult Idaho population. With 132,000 marijuana users in 2014 alone, along with the average spent per year of $1,195, the total amount that this age group would spend on a legal marijuana industry would be $157,740,000 once the statewide marijuana economy stabilizes. If Idaho was to implement the same tax structure of other states, a 25% tax would be implemented on the product. After getting past the difficulties of the initial steps of obtaining licenses, and if the marijuana industry was to stabilize in 2-3 years at the same rate that Colorado did, this would amount to $39,435,000 in tax revenue for the entire year, just from retail purchases alone. This is assuming that every marijuana user would buy their own marijuana, and not partake in activities where they will give others the drug. This is also assuming that every marijuana user will buy the drug legally, and use the exact same amount every month or every year.

![RECREATIONAL TAX REVENUE PER STATE (IN MILLIONS)](chart)

With this new form of tax revenue, Idaho would be able to improve the quality of life for its citizens. This money can be used for the construction of new schools, law enforcement,
substance abuse programs, and even new roads for transportation. Oregon specifically is using the marijuana tax revenue as follows:

- 40 percent goes to the common school fund to further education
- 20 percent is going to the Mental Health, Alcoholism and Drug Services Account
- 15 percent is going to the State Police of Oregon
- 10 percent is going to both the counties and cities for local law enforcement

The remaining five percent is going to the Oregon Health Authority, which will use the money for alcohol and drug abuse prevention, early intervention, and treatment services (DOROR, 2016). While there is a definite profit to be made regarding taxes, the next sector of this research study focuses on the perception of the drug among college students of LCSC.

The first question within the survey was how the participants believed marijuana should be scheduled. Currently listed as a Schedule I narcotic, this puts the drug in the same category as heroin and ecstasy. As shown in Table 1, out of the 25 people that participated, not a single person believed that this is a proper classification for the drug. Most of the individuals believe that marijuana should be a classified under Schedule III. A Schedule III classification of the drug would label the drug under the same category as Tylenol with codeine, anabolic steroids, and testosterone.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Proper Classification Statistics</th>
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<tr>
<td>Schedule I (ecstasy, heroin)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schedule II (meth, cocaine)</td>
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<td>Schedule III (Tylenol w/codeine, steroids)</td>
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<td>Schedule IV (Xanax, ambien)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schedule V (robitussin, lyrica)</td>
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<td>Number of Participants</td>
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<td>6</td>
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Table 1

The succeeding questions inquired if the individual believes that marijuana should be
legal for medical purposes, and then if they believe the drug should be legal for recreational purposes. Out of the 25 people asked, Table 2 shows that only one individual thought that the drug should remain illegal even for medical reasons. This individual believed that the drug is deemed as a gateway drug, and could result in the patient or user experimenting with other addictive drugs.

When the question asked whether marijuana should be legal for recreational reasons, 67% believed that the drug should be made legal. The results also brought forth that even though six people thought that the drug should not be legalized for recreational use, five of these individuals thought that it would be acceptable solely for medical purposes. These results in Table 2 indicate that marijuana is becoming more accepted in today’s society, similar to findings shown in the Friese & Grube (2013) study in the literature review.

The next set of questions asked whether legalizing recreational marijuana would be beneficial, or detrimental for the communities in Idaho. Seventy-five percent claimed they thought that legalization of recreational marijuana would be beneficial for society by creating more jobs, and also serving as a larger tax base for public services. Twenty-five percent thought that legalizing marijuana would not be beneficial at all, while one person had no opinion on the matter. When asked if they thought that legalizing marijuana in Idaho would lower the quality of life by increasing the number of individuals driving under the influence, and those attending

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Perception of Marijuana Between College Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical Legalization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
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Table 2
work or school under the influence, seventy-two percent thought that the quality of life would not be negatively impacted when it came to new legislation for the drug. The main concern among those who thought that the legalization of marijuana would lower the quality of life, was that marijuana should be seen as a gateway drug to more severe drugs and criminal activity.

Regarding concerns about an increased need for substance abuse treatment, as you can see in Table 2, ten participants believed that the legalization of the drug would result in more substance abuse treatment, where the other 15 thought that it would have zero impact. When the participants were asked if they believed that marijuana legalization and taxation of the drug would boost the economy, 23 of the 25 individuals thought that it would. This is a predictable result because any taxation of a product would accumulate tax revenue for the state as a whole.

In addition to the survey of 25 students, an interview with a member of the Idaho Senate was also conducted to compare the ideology between the two groups. Russ Fulcher is a Republican member of the Idaho Senate, and has served for nearly a decade.

When asked if Fulcher believed that there would be any economic benefit of legalizing recreational marijuana, he stated that there would definitely be an increase of tax revenue from sales, but economic costs of legalization would be far more than the benefit. He identified economic costs of a potential loss of worker productivity, vehicular and workplace accidents due to impairment, an increase in addiction treatment, indigent care, and the expungement of previous marijuana related cases from criminal records. He then stated that although it is yet to be proven, there are also those that claim legalization is resulting in an increase in mortality rate and has adverse effects on the future of young adults through: increases in anxiety, panic, depression, psychotic symptoms, cognitive losses, neuropsychological decline and various adverse health effects, such as psychosis.

When asked if he believes that the legalization of recreational marijuana would set a new
standard for other drugs to become legalized, he stated that he does see that this movement could set a new standard. For those who argue for the legalization of recreational marijuana, he suggests that it would be best to stay away from the economic argument, and focus the argument on the proliferation of personal freedoms.

Comparing the results from the 25 participants, and the interview with Senator Fulcher, there were definitely some commonalities along with the differences. While the survey indicated that marijuana is an overall accepted drug, the ideology from Senator Fulcher shows that this does not mean that the drug should become a legal substance. Even if the legalization of recreational marijuana would bring in tax revenue, we must keep in mind that there will be costs associated with the profit. The comparison between the two shows that while profit for the state would definitely be made, the real question lies in if the profit outweighs the consequences of sacrificing a level of public safety.

**Discussions and Implications**

This study examined the way students of Lewis-Clark State College view marijuana, and compares this ideology with that of a member of the Idaho State Legislature. With the results from the study, along with the findings in the literature review, there were many similarities along with differences. The Ruben (2014) study of California residents in the literature review highlighted how the general population is becoming more accepting of marijuana, just as shown in the survey among college students at LCSC. The Ruben study found that in 2014, 80% of individuals surveyed over the phone in California supported the legalization of medical marijuana, where the survey conducted among LCSC students found that 96% of participants supported medical marijuana. Conversely, the Ruben study found that a vast majority of individuals only support the drug being legalized medicinally, while the survey conducted among LCSC students stated otherwise.
Another major finding compared to the literature review, was about the proper classification of the current Schedule I narcotic of marijuana. As shown in the results from the study among LCSC students, 100% of individuals that participated believed that the drug was improperly classified as a Schedule I drug. A proper reclassification of marijuana could lead to hindering the monstrous issue of overpopulation within our prison systems. Even with the economic benefits set aside, the misclassification and general acceptance of marijuana should be enough to disintegrate the political-scientific standstill that is going on today.

This study has identified a definite economic benefit to legalizing marijuana for recreational purposes. With an estimation of a potential $40 million in tax revenue to Idaho in a given year, the state could put this money towards education, hiring more members of law enforcement, and to increase our means of transportation with the development of new roads. Another strength of this study shows that although the majority favors the legalization of recreational marijuana, our state legislature is looking past the economic benefits and focusing more on public safety.

Keep in mind there would be less drug convictions if marijuana was recreationally legalized, and our overpopulation problem within our prison systems alone would save a tremendous amount of money. According to the VERA Institute of Justice the annual cost of each inmate in Idaho costs around $19,545 (VERA, 2012). According to the Idaho Department of Corrections, there is approximately 8000 individuals incarcerated within Idaho alone (DOCID, (n.d.)). Knowing that approximately 48.8% of these individuals are in there for non-violent drug crimes, the costs to keep the individuals incarcerated for marijuana crimes costs a significant amount of money.

The findings from this study may influence the acts of future research that would impact the public policy that we have today. In order for the economic benefits of legalizing recreational
marijuana to take place, we must first have support from our state legislature. If legislation favoring recreational marijuana is not possible, a strong compromise between the two would be a reclassification for the drug. This research study conducted among students may have proved that the majority supports legislation favoring recreational marijuana, and that there is a magnitude of tax revenue to be made if Idaho was to do so, but the question that should be asked next is if these benefits outweigh the consequences of sacrificing a level of public safety.
References


FAQs on I-502 | Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board


Marijuana and the Controlled Substances Act. (2014).*Congressional Digest, 93*(8), 2-6.


Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration. (n.d.). *Oregon*. Retrieved from


Survey

**Question #1** - Marijuana is currently classified as a Schedule I drug (most dangerous). Below are the description and examples of the different classifications of drugs. Where do you think marijuana is properly classified?

Choose only **one** answer below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule I Drugs</th>
<th>Schedule I drugs include:</th>
<th>Marijuana should stay as a Schedule I drug</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classified as having:</td>
<td>• Marijuana</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Zero medical usage</td>
<td>• Heroin</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High abuse potential</td>
<td>• Ecstasy</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule II Drugs</th>
<th>Schedule II drugs include:</th>
<th>Marijuana should be reclassified as a Schedule II drug</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High abuse potential</td>
<td>• Cocaine</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Methamphetamine</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ritalin</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule III Drugs</th>
<th>Schedule III drugs include:</th>
<th>Marijuana should be reclassified as a Schedule III drug</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderate to low abuse potential</td>
<td>• Tylenol with codeine</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Anabolic steroids</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Testosterone</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule IV Drugs</th>
<th>Schedule IV drugs include:</th>
<th>Marijuana should be reclassified as a Schedule IV drug</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low potential for abuse</td>
<td>• Xanax</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Valium</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ambien</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule V</th>
<th>Schedule V drugs include:</th>
<th>Marijuana should be reclassified as a Schedule V drug</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowest potential for abuse</td>
<td>• Robitussin AC (Cough preparations with &lt; 200 mg of codeine)</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question #2** - Do you think that marijuana should be legalized for medical purposes in Idaho?

**Yes ☐ No ☐

**Question #3** - Do you think legalizing marijuana in Idaho would improve the quality of life in Idaho (e.g., more jobs, larger tax base for public services)?

**Yes ☐ No ☐**
Question #4 - Do you think legalizing marijuana in Idaho would help Idaho’s economy?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Question #5 – Do you think legalizing marijuana in Idaho would lower the quality of life in Idaho (e.g., more crime, driving under the influence, people attending work or school while under the influence, etc.)?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Question #6 - Do you think more people would need substance abuse treatment if marijuana was legalized in Idaho?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Question #8 - Is there anything else you would like to say either in support or opposing the legalization of marijuana in Idaho?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Interview Questions

**Question #1** - How would expunging marijuana related records affect the workloads of the prosecutors? The courts? Idaho’s Economy?

**Question #2** - Do you see any economic benefits to legalizing marijuana?

**Question #3** – Do you have any concerns about legalizing marijuana?

**Question #4** - How would legalizing marijuana affect the state’s economy (e.g., more jobs, larger tax base for public services)?

**Question #5** - Are you concerned that if marijuana became legalized on the state level, this could set a new standard and result in other drugs becoming legalized?

**Question #6** - Is there anything else you may want to say about this topic?