



Welcome to SMARTNews. This newsletter is an extension of the Start SMART NY campaign to reform New York's marijuana laws, which is supported by a coalition convened by the Drug Policy Alliance and comprised of various groups and organizations dedicated to ending marijuana prohibition. We will be your monthly source of news and events related to the campaign.

## - Mission Statement -

[Start SMART NY](#) – Sensible Marijuana Access through Regulated Trade – is the campaign dedicated to ending marijuana prohibition in New York. We believe that it is time to stop the ineffective, racially biased, and unjust enforcement of marijuana prohibition and to create a new, well-regulated, and inclusive marijuana industry that is rooted in racial and economic justice.

New York's marijuana policies are broken. Prohibition has done more harm than good. Arrests prohibit individuals from fully participating in society, inhibiting their ability to get a loan, get a job, go to college, or even have a place to live. [Start SMART NY](#) is more than a call to action, it is a demand for a new approach. We believe that while legalizing marijuana for adult use won't alleviate all the challenges faced by those communities who are most criminalized, it will remove a tool that has been used for their criminalization.

We also believe that marijuana reform is criminal justice reform and immigration reform, and that it is entwined with economic justice and at the nexus of racial justice. Further, we understand that in finding a SMART way to end prohibition and move forward into a new era -- we must also look back and repair the harm that's been caused.

Our campaign goals are to: end to senseless marijuana arrests and citations, create a public dialogue on collateral consequences and the hyper criminalization of communities, transform stigma, and build economic power. And we believe that all of this CAN be done while also inhibiting access for minors, putting state tax dollars to better use, creating new jobs, and generating millions in tax revenue.

Prohibition is broken. Legalization is coming. Let's [Start SMART](#).

## Keeping You Up to Date

- Governor Cuomo rejoins fight to close "public view" loophole in New York's marijuana possession law, codifying Mayor DeBlasio's New York City reforms of 2014. The loophole has been used to arrest over 800,000 New Yorkers since 1996, 86% of whom are people of color.

[See the story here.](#)

[Learn More](#)

## Marijuana Stat of the Month

# #4

**A marijuana arrest or conviction is the number 4 reason why a non-citizen is deported or determined to be inadmissible.**

*\*According to Immigrations and Customs Enforcement 2013 data including possession and sale.*

## Beyond the Numbers

Each month in this newsletter we will share the personal stories of New Yorkers who are being directly impacted by New York's marijuana

policies. Their full names will not be shared.



One evening in Brooklyn, 57 year-old Aubrey was approached by two NYPD officers in his parked car. He asked what the concern was and the officers claimed they had smelled marijuana coming from his car.

“They said they smelled it near the car and then asked me if I was carrying any.” After searching the car, the officers found the ends of a rolled joint. Aubrey then admitted to having one gram of marijuana in his possession. When the officers ran his information, they told him that he would only receive a ticket if he did not have any outstanding offenses. After running his information, they found a warrant for riding a bicycle on the sidewalk under the same name. But the name on that warrant belonged to Aubrey’s deceased son.

The officers arrested Aubrey on marijuana charges in addition to the warrant, and Aubrey spent the next couple of nights at the precinct before appearing before a judge. “I told them that it was not my ticket and my son had recently passed,” Aubrey recalls, “but the judge told me that I would need to provide a death certificate for that ticket.” Aubrey did not receive a death certificate or attempt to have another desk appearance, as he said he did not have time to return for another court date. The end result saw him paying a fine for the bicycle incident and receiving “time-served” plus six months of probation for marijuana possession.

After living in the United States for 42 years, Aubrey is applying for his citizenship after repeated attempts. “I do believe it affects [my citizenship] process,” he said. “They know what your record or history is and that must be a factor to finally becoming an American.”



## Why is marijuana legalization a SMART choice for New York?

“I support the Start SMART NY Campaign because it is time for marijuana prohibition to end. It has played a significant role in devastating low-income communities of color through racially biased enforcement and has often come with steep collateral consequences. We believe it’s time for a new approach and that approach shouldn’t involve criminalizing New York’s most vulnerable populations.”

**Alyssa Aguilera, Co-Executive Director, VOCAL-NY**



## Featured Event

**Ending the Marijuana Arrest Crusade, Legislative Day of Action:** VOCAL-NY and the Drug Policy Alliance

Join advocates for a day of action in Albany, demanding Legislators to repair the harm caused by decades of unjust and racially biased policing.

Albany, New York  
February 28th 10am-4pm

For more information, contact Chris Alexander at [calexander@drugpolicy.org](mailto:calexander@drugpolicy.org)

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**Learn about more upcoming events related to marijuana reform**

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# Get Involved

Marijuana Prohibition is coming to an end -  
join the fight.

For more information, contact Chris Alexander  
at [calexander@drugpolicy.org](mailto:calexander@drugpolicy.org)



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