



Welcome to SMARTNews, part of the Start SMART NY campaign to reform New York's marijuana laws. Start SMART NY 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.

Marijuana Updates

- The New York State Assembly is working again to expand New York's medical marijuana program in response to calls to action from advocates. The Assembly passed A. 7006 (*Gottfried*) which would add PTSD as a qualifying condition for treatment, allowing those suffering from the disorder to be treated with medical marijuana. The bill still has to pass the State Senate but the Governor has expressed his support for adding the condition. [Read more here.](#)
- National support for marijuana legalization has continued to grow. [A recent poll by CBS has support for legalization at 61%](#), the highest it has ever been. An Albany based newspaper, [City and State New York](#), conducted their own online poll among their readers showing 85% support for legalizing marijuana for adult use.
- The Homeland Security Secretary, John Kelly, has pledged that ICE agents will use marijuana possession charges as the department seeks to expand the deportation of non-citizens. He stated the policy will continue regardless of state laws that have ended prohibition. [See the story here.](#)
- For the second year, Vermont's State Legislature has passed a legislative measure that would end marijuana prohibition in the State. The most recent measure removes criminal penalties for use, makes an allowance for possession up to one ounce, and creates a commission to develop a plan to tax and regulate the sale of marijuana. The bill is yet to be signed by the Governor but if this measure moves forward, Vermont will be the first state to end marijuana prohibition via legislative action. [Read more here.](#)

[Learn More](#)

Marijuana Stat of the Month

50%

The percentage of Americans who have tried marijuana.

**According to a 2017 CBS News Poll on Marijuana*



Beyond the Numbers

Each month in this newsletter we will share the personal stories of the people who are being directly impacted by New York's marijuana policies. Their full names will not be shared.



Binghamton, New York - Andre and his three friends were on a road trip from Westchester to visit some of their friends in Upstate New York. It was midday and about three-quarters of the way through their trip. Andre, the driver, noticed that NY State Troopers had pulled another car over a couple hundred yards ahead. After double checking to ensure he was not speeding, he slowed down his vehicle an additional 10 miles per hour to ensure he would not startle the police officer making the stop ahead.

After a couple of miles had passed, Andre noticed a police car with its lights on behind him. As a young man of color, he was justifiably afraid. He pulled over and, before the officer could make a statement to inquire for identification, Andre asked what the issue was. He knew that he hadn't passed any police

“speed traps” and was prepared to defend any claim by the officer that he was speeding. The officer, now annoyed, asked why Andre hadn’t moved to the left lane when passing the traffic stop. “I didn’t know that I had to go over to the next lane but I made sure that I wasn’t driving too fast or too close to him just out of courtesy.”

The officer told Andre that he was going to get a ticket for interfering with the stop. After some protesting by Andre and his three passengers, the officer claimed to smell marijuana. Andre knew he didn’t have anything on him but wasn’t sure what was in his passengers’ bags. “I told him we didn’t have anything and he thought I was lying.”

The officer asked everyone to exit the car and began a search. After not finding anything in the front of the car, the officer told Andre to open the trunk. He found marijuana in one of the passenger’s bags. The officer then threatened and prepared to arrest Andre and his friends before one of his passengers claimed ownership of the marijuana. The young man was arrested for possession of marijuana and taken to the local county jail to await an opportunity to see the Judge. Hoping that his friend would not be held for long, Andre and the rest of his passengers waited for the judge.

The friend will have to return to fight his case.



Why is marijuana legalization a SMART choice for New York?

“Legalizing marijuana is a SMART choice for New York. For years, prohibition has devastated families, kept communities of color in constant fear, and justified the exclusion and disappearance of our fellow New Yorkers from the country. Because our country’s harsh immigration laws mandate severe punishment for a wide range of drug offenses, New York’s senseless marijuana policies only help Trump’s mass deportation agenda. As communities across the state face down an onslaught of abusive ICE raids and criminalization, the moment for New York State to end prohibition is now. It’s good policy for immigrants and for all of us.”

Alisa Wellek, Executive Director, Immigrant Defense Project

Featured Event

The Trump Administration and Drug Policy: New York City Bar Association

In light of the results of the November 8, 2016 election, the Drugs & the Law Committee invites the legal community and the public at large to join in a discussion regarding timely challenges in drug policy. This event will include a discussion on new approaches and practical solutions to drug use, abuse, manufacture, and distribution facing the Trump Administration. Topics to be discussed include advances in cannabis controls, racial bias in drug law enforcement, civil forfeiture, the ongoing opioid crisis, and new approaches to treating substance use disorders.

Featuring:

James M. Cole, Partner, Sidley Austin LLP and former U.S. Deputy Attorney General

Dr. Andrew Tatarsky, Founder and Director, The Center for Optimal Living
Allan Clear, Director, Drug User Health, AIDS Institute, State Department of Health
Alyssa Aguilera, Co-Executive Director, [VOCAL-NY](#)
Tess Borden, 2015-2017 Aryeh Neier Fellow, American Civil Liberties Union and Human Rights Watch

42 West 44th Street
New York, NY 10036
May 25th, 6pm-9pm

Admission to this event is \$10

[See event details here](#)

Learn about more upcoming events related to marijuana reform

Get Involved

Marijuana Prohibition is coming to an end - [join the fight.](#)

For more information, [visit our website](#) or contact us at startswith@drugpolicy.org



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