

## TOPIC: LEGALIZATION OF ILLICIT DRUGS

The United States federal government should legalize all illicit drugs.

### BACKGROUND:

Understanding Illicit Drugs: Illicit drugs refer to highly addictive and illegal substances such as Heroin, Marijuana, and Meth. While the decision to use one of these drugs for the first time is usually a voluntary one, an unexpected addiction can make the decision to quit later significantly harder. —[Addiction Center, Last Updated: Oct 2021](#)

From the U.S. Department of Justice Website: Drug legalization would benefit the United States in several ways: save Federal, State, and local governments billions of dollars a year; lead to reduced crime and safer neighborhoods; and enhance public health. Government at all levels spends about \$100 billion a year on law enforcement and criminal justice programs to combat the drug problem, and about \$35 billion is directly related to drug law enforcement. About \$50 billion a year could be saved if drugs were legalized, and this figure could go as high as \$150 billion a year if one considers the resources spent on ineffective drug suppression activities. Drug legalization could increase property values in cities but would not solve the problem of inner city decay and disintegration. If the illicit drug business no longer existed in cities, streets and schools would become safer. About one-third of inmates would not be in prison if it were no longer a crime to possess or traffic in illicit drugs. Further, if drugs were legalized, dangers to public health from using heroin, cocaine, and marijuana would be greatly reduced since legalizing drugs would probably reduce the use of harmful drugs. The main risk of drug legalization concerns the potential for increased drug consumption. Because the drug market is already saturated with a combination of legal and illegal drugs, however, virtually everyone who wants to get “high” already does so. The authors conclude that, considering all benefits and costs, the case for drug legalization is overwhelming. —[Legalizing Drugs Would Benefit the U.S. \(Legalizing Drugs, 1996\)](#)

### REQUIRED RESEARCH (VIDEOS): < 15 mins

- What is All Drug Decriminalization?, Drug Policy Alliance, January 27, 2020 [1 min]  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXbtZw69Ugo>
- [VIDEO] Why The War on Drugs Is a Huge Failure, Kurtzgesagt, March 1, 2016 [7 min]  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJUXLqNHCal>
- What is the Drug War? With Jay-Z & Molly Crabapple, Drug Policy Alliance, September 15, 2016 [4 min]  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSozqaVcOU8>
- Marijuana: Why the drug became illegal, and the future of legalization, USA TODAY, January 6, 2021 [2 min]  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=usySX8aKTXs>
- Report, suggests marijuana could bring billions to New York, Lohud News, February 11, 2021 [1 min]  
<https://www.lohud.com/story/money/2021/02/11/new-york-marijuana-legalization-scotts-miracle-gro-report-says-billions-revenue-jobs/6708856002/>

## REQUIRED RESEARCH (ARTICLES):

- A History of the Drug War, and Drug Decriminalization, Drug Policy Alliance, Last Accessed: December 2021  
<https://drugpolicy.org/issues/brief-history-drug-war>  
<https://drugpolicy.org/issues/drug-decriminalization>
- Oregon Just Decriminalized All Drugs – Here’s Why Voters Passed This Groundbreaking Reform, U.S. News & World Report, December 10, 2020  
<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2020-12-10/oregon-just-decriminalized-all-drugs-heres-why-voters-passed-this-groundbreaking-reform>
- Report: The Global War on Drugs Has Failed. Is It Time to Legalize?, TIME Magazine, June 2, 2011  
<https://world.time.com/2011/06/02/report-the-global-war-on-drugs-has-failed-is-it-time-to-legalize/>
- Marijuana Legalization Isn’t Delivering What Supporters Promised, Newsweek, April 2, 2021  
<https://www.newsweek.com/marijuana-legalization-isnt-delivering-what-supporters-promised-opinion-1580460>

## OPTIONAL RESEARCH (ARTICLES & VIDEOS):

- [VIDEO] The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander: Black Codes pt.1, Urban Finance, December 1, 2019 [5 min]  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQ\\_FxWcu4ul](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQ_FxWcu4ul)  
Note: The final point is that drug laws are a continuation of the original injustice.
- [VIDEO] An Introduction to Michelle Alexander’s The New Jim Crow, A Macat Sociology Analysis, April 11, 2016 [4 min]  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWU6ZfnqNHM>  
Note: Drug laws further this intentional persecution of the Black community, particularly disempowering and disenfranchising young Black men.
- [VIDEO] Meet the Neuroscientist Who Wants to Decriminalize Drugs, VICE News, March 7, 2021 [6 min]  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PncLSxDEIYM>  
Prof. Carl Hart, Neuroscientist, Columbia University, who wants the rest of the country to follow Oregon’s lead.
- Pros and Cons of Decriminalizing Drug Addiction, Foundations Recovery Network, April 23, 2018  
<https://www.foundationsrecoverynetwork.com/pros-and-cons-of-decriminalizing-drug-addiction/>
- Should Recreational Marijuana Be Legal?, Pro-con.org, Last Updated: November 13, 2018  
<https://marijuana.procon.org/>

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