Marijuana: Is It Safe Enough To Be Legal In The Un Essay, Research Paper

Outline Thesis statement: Marijuana has many benefits which need to be addressed and can only be utilized if it becomes legal.MARJUANA: IS IT SAFE ENOUGH TO BE LEGAL IN THE UNITED STATES?I. Introduction A. Statistics B Thesis statementII. History A. First recorded medical use by emperor Shen-nung in 2737 BC B. O Shaughnessy statement C. First extensive study by OMS in 1860 D. Controlled Substances ActIII. Marijuana endorsements A. Government studies B. Editorial boardsIV. Medical use A. List of ailments known to be affected by marijuanaB. Nausea and vomitingC. Cancer & AIDS treatmentV. MythsA. Marijuana is extremely lethalB. Tobacco is not as dangerous as marijuanaC. Marijuana leads to other drugsVI. Charts, Tables, and GraphsA. Comparison of percent of use in US and Netherlands and Australian territoriesB. Rise of adolescent marijuana use since prohibitionC. Severity of penalties does not affect the adolescent use trendD. 2 availability graphsE. ABC News/Discovery News pollF. CBS News phone pollVII. ConclusionA. Basic summaryB. RecollectionC. Restatement of thesis • California saves $100 million annually in enforcement costs because of its recent partial decriminalization of marijuana (Marijuana Policy Project Foundation, Marijuana Prohibition FACTS, 2). • The Marijuana Policy Project Foundation (MPP) has estimated that taxpayers pay $7 billion a year to fund the war on marijuana (MPP, Marijuana Prohibition FACTS, 2). • When marijuana was first federally prohibited in 1937, very few Americans even knew of its existence. Today, nearly 62 years later, 70 million Americans have admitted to trying it (MPP, Marijuana Prohibition FACTS, 1). • In the 1800s, J.R. Reynolds, Queen Victoria s personal physician, announced that marijuana was by far the most useful of drugs for treating painful maladies (Fact Sheets, 1). • The number of states that have passed laws recognizing the medical value of marijuana is now 34, which is 68% of the union (Fact Sheets, 2). The decriminalization of marijuana has been one of the most heavily debated topics in modern history. A proverbial line has been drawn in the sand, and large groups of people stand on either side. Each side has mustered thousands of arguments and legions of facts in support of their views. Everyone has his reasons for favoring or opposing the marijuana legalization movement. Marijuana has many benefits- medical, economical and otherwise- which need to be addressed and can only be utilized if it becomes legal. Marijuana s (cannabis sativa or cannabis indica) history as a medicinal herb dates back thousands of years. Its first recorded medical use was by the Chinese emperor Shen-nung in 2737 BC. Many civilized societies throughout history have used cannabis for pain relief, religious rites, and social gatherings- from the Assyrians and Persians of long ago, to African tribes, to modern day Tibetans and Chinese. In the 1830s, Dr. William B. O Shaughnessy did several experiments dealing with the preparation of marijuana. O Shaughnessy, a British doctor working at the Medical College of Calcutta, determined marijuana was both safe and effective as a remedy for rabies, rheumatism, epilepsy, and tetanus. In 1860, the Ohio Medical Society (OMS) completed the first extensive study of marijuana as medicine. Success was reported in the treatment of stomach pain & gastric distress, neuralgia, chronic cough, psychosis, and gonorrhea. Today, however, Federal regulations make any kind of research of marijuana extremely difficult. Many areas of medical application that appear promising have not been studied sufficiently or have gone unstudied, including: AIDS, analgesic action, tumor retardation, reactions to chemotherapy, mental illness, asthma, epilepsy, and nervous disorders (Fact Sheets, 1-2). Marijuana is classified as a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substances Act, and is defined as having no accepted medical value. The act classifies cannabis as a new drug despite its long medical history, and it can only be obtained via an Investigational New Drug Application (IND), which can only be issued by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) (Fact Sheets, 2). Many credible and renowned organizations have endorsed the use of legal marijuana. Here are a few examples:• Every government commission that has examined marijuana comprehensively and objectively in the past 100 years recommends that adults not be criminalized for the use of marijuana (MPP, Marijuana Prohibition FACTS, 1). • A few editorial boards have endorsed medical-use marijuana. They include Boston Globe; Chicago Tribune; Miami Herald; New York Times; USA Today; Orange County Register (MPP, Marijuana Prohibition FACTS, 2). Marijuana has proven effective in treating muscular spasticity, the side effects of chemotherapy, glaucoma, the AIDS wasting syndrome, epilepsy, nausea, vomiting, and more (Alliance for Cannabis Therapeutics, 2). In fact, the FDA lists 33 studies of marijuana in association with the treatment of nausea and vomiting. Of those 33 studies, at least eight conclude that marijuana, and its active ingredient, delta-9-THC, reduce nausea and vomiting (Fact Sheets, 3).Chemotherapy can prolong a cancer patient s life- often as long as several years. This treatment also has some very severe side effects, like horrible nausea and vomiting. AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) patients experience these same side effects brought on by AZT and new protease inhibitor drugs. The wasting syndrome associated with AIDS treatment can starve the patient to death (Fact Sheets, 2).

Cannabis has been proven to reduce significantly the side effects of chemotherapy while stimulating the appetite at the same time. Thus, the benefits are twofold: 1) AIDS and cancer patients can keep food down and keep body strength up, and 2) the life-prolonging treatments become tolerable for the patient (Fact Sheets, 2).Myths and misconceptions run rampant in society today. These are simply a result of miseducation and can easily be proved false. A few of the more common misconceptions follow.1. Myth: Marijuana is extremely lethal This is probably the most widely accepted, as well as the one of the most untrue misconceptions about marijuana. The ratio of the amount of marijuana needed to intoxicate a person as compared to the amount needed to kill a person is 1:40,000. This means that it takes 40,000 times more marijuana to kill someone than it does to get him or her high. The ratio for alcohol is between 1:4 and 1:10. As a direct result, more then 5,000 people die from alcohol overdoses EVERY YEAR, but no one has EVER- in the recorded history of the world- died of a marijuana overdose (Hager, 4). 2. Myth: Marijuana is more dangerous than tobacco In actuality, marijuana has about the same amount of cancer agents in it as tobacco. However, a heavy marijuana smoker consumes less marijuana than a smoker consumes tobacco. The active ingredient in smoked tobacco- nicotine- is actually considered to be the most dangerous and addictive of all drugs, while marijuana is not even as addictive as caffeine. There are devices, such as water pipes and bongs which filter most carcinogens out of marijuana smoke, but these are illegal. Marijuana is MUCH safer than tobacco (Hager, 2).3. Myth: Marijuana leads to other drugsHolland is a good example of why this is false. Since Holland partially legalized marijuana in the 70s, heroin and cocaine use have declined substantially. A comparison by the Rand Corporation in 1993 revealed that hard drug use was significantly lower in states that had legalized marijuana than those that had not. Marijuana seems to be a less harmful, less addictive substitute for drugs such as tobacco, alcohol, cocaine, and heroin (Hager, 1-2). A prohibitionist group in New York known as the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) conducted a poll. The results follow in graphical form. This research would seem to suggest that most kids consider marijuana to be easier to obtain than beer. Since alcohol (i.e. beer) is legal, it seems being illegal does not make marijuana any more difficult to obtain than if it were legal. One conclusion that can be drawn from this is that marijuana s prohibition has not effectively stopped or even reduced use among adolescents, which was one of its primary functions.Decriminalizing marijuana may in fact reduce marijuana usage. The percentage of the population which use marijuana is lower in the Netherlands- where marijuana is legal- than in the United States. The graph below is a representation of these facts. This suggests that legalization in the United States may actually DECREASE marijuana use (MPP, Marijuana Prohibition Has Not Curtailed Marijuana Use By Adolescents, 2).ABC News/Discovery News conducted a survey by asking random adults the question, Should marijuana be legalized? Support OpposeLegalizing medical use of marijuana 69% 27% if research shows it effective 77% 18% if research shows it ineffective 20% 75%This poll simply proved that the American people WANT legal medical marijuana. Seventy-seven percent of those surveyed said they would want to legalize marijuana if it is shown effective against illness- which it has been (MPP, Recent Research and Reports, 2).As stated earlier, and supported by volume upon volumes of research, marijuana is a useful and helpful drug and its criminalization only harms this country in several ways. Marijuana has been proven to help fight diseases, is not as addictive as some legal drugs, it does no permanent harm, and its prohibition- while costing American citizens billions in enforcement- has not effectively stopped its use by children or adults.

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Alliance for Cannabis Therapeutics. Marijuana as Medicine FAQ. http://www.cannabis.com/faqs/actfaq.html (25 Nov. 1998) Hager, Paul. Marijuana Myths. http://www.drugtext.org/sub/marymyt1.html (25 Nov. 1998) Marijuana Policy Project Foundation (MPP). Marijuana Prohibition Facts. http://www.mpp.org/prohfact.html (1 Dec. 1998) Marijuana Policy Project Foundation (MPP). Marijuana Prohibition has not Curtailed Marijuana Use by Adolescents. http://www.mpp.org/adolescents.html (1 Dec. 1998) Marijuana Policy Project Foundation (MPP). Recent Research and Reports. Marijuana Policy Report, Summer/Fall 1997 http://www.mpp.org/reports.html (1 Dec. 1998) Fact Sheets. http://www.berkeley.cal.edu/mari/pub/sheet.htm (25 Nov. 1998)