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## **BANK CAUGHT CHEATING IN FACEBOOK CHARITY CONTEST** ***Chase Boycotted After Bank Rigs Its Own Competition***

This Wednesday, Chase Bank released the first round winners of its \$5 million Community Giving competition on Facebook, prompting a boycott from organizations that are claiming foul play.

Telling Facebook members, "You Decide What Matters," the banking firm allowed the public to vote on organizations to receive \$25,000 and an opportunity for \$1 million. Days before the voting ended, Chase removed the vote counters from the site, obscuring the final results of the contest. Two drug policy reform groups, the Marijuana Policy Project and Students for Sensible Drug Policy, gained the several thousands of votes needed to place well within the Top 100, but were silently left out of the list of winners without explanation from Chase. Chase has refused to publish the final vote counts.

"This is a smack in the face to the millions of Facebook users who took part in this contest," said Micah Daigle, executive director of Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP). "It is clear that Chase never intended to allow Facebook users to 'decide what matters.' Instead, they rigged the contest and picked their favorites. When they saw who the winners were, they changed the rules." Daigle had been in contact with several Chase representatives throughout the course of the month-long competition, and there was no mention of ineligibility as they helped him to fix technical issues with the site.

After attempting to gain clarification about the reasons for disqualification, Daigle received an e-mail from Chase Spokesperson Christine Holevas stating, "I don't have any information to give you."

Others who won a place in the Top 100 are confused by the disqualification of these groups, including Alex Koroknay-Palicz of the National Youth Rights Association. "We're very grateful for the grant and our members are excited that we won. We are, however, confused at the exclusion of SSDP and MPP. According to our tallies, both those organizations had more votes than we did."

Recent polls show mainstream acceptance of drug policy reform. 75% of Americans believe the War on Drugs is a failure and 53% approve of marijuana legalization. "Marijuana reform is one of the most popular issues in the country right now." said Aaron Houston of the Marijuana Policy Project. "When President Obama asked the public to vote online for new policy ideas, ending marijuana prohibition was voted number one. Marijuana will remain a hot topic until the laws are fixed."

Other organizations are also claiming that they were unfairly left out of the Top 100, including Justice For All, an organization that advocates against abortion. But some organizations with controversial positions were not disqualified, including a group that works to lower the drinking and voting age, and three others that promote LGBTQ education for young people. These groups have won \$25,000 and have moved onto the next round of the contest.

SSDP plans to set up a website where supporters can pledge to boycott the bank.

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