

The Economy and Social Services

The billions of dollars spent on the Drug War every year means that less of our limited public resources are available for education, health care, homeland security, and environmental protection. But if drugs were regulated under the law we would not only save money on drug law enforcement, but we could institute a sales tax and bring millions of additional dollars a year into the public coffers.

Civil Liberties and Privacy

Long before the PATRIOT Act, police forces and federal agents knocked down Americans' doors, ransacked their homes, and listened to their phone conversations—all in the name of the War on Drugs.

Foreign Policy

U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration officials often unilaterally set up shop and conduct investigations in foreign countries with no respect for local laws or customs. U.S. Drug War activities in Colombia directly lead to increased instability and violence in the region.

Public Health

Drug use should be treated as a public health issue, and not a criminal justice issue. Unfortunately, prohibition increases the risk of overdose deaths by scaring people away from calling for medical help when it is needed. The unregulated criminal market ensures that users don't know what they're putting into their bodies.

Zero tolerance laws that restrict access to clean needles only ensure the spread of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases by encouraging dirty needle sharing. People in prison are exposed to diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis C at an alarmingly increased rate.

SSDP's Recent Accomplishments

- Forced the Republican Congress to scale back the Higher Education Act Aid Elimination Penalty, which has prevented nearly 200,000 lower- and middle-income students with drug convictions from receiving financial aid. SSDP mobilized 125 student governments to voice their opposition to the unjust policy.
- Defeated the Department of Education in a lawsuit seeking information about the number of students who have lost financial aid due to drug convictions in each state. When the DoE sought to make us pay an exorbitant sum for our Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, we sued, and The New York Times editorialized on our behalf.
- Mobilized student activists in SSDP chapters nationwide to reform campus, local, and state drug policies. In our new Campus Change Campaign, several chapters have already passed student voter initiatives for more sensible campus drug policies. Some SSDP chapters have passed statewide legislation and local ballot initiatives.
- Initiated debate on the validity of student drug testing at White House-sponsored summits. By presenting data to school administrators considering drug testing, SSDP activists ensured that alternative perspectives were considered.
- Covered by The New York Times, CNN, The Associated Press, USA Today, MTV, Rolling Stone, The Nation, Congressional Quarterly, hundreds of campus papers, and many other prominent outlets.
- Organizes an annual international conference with hundreds of students from campuses across the U.S. and Canada.

Start your own chapter of Students for Sensible Drug Policy and work towards more rational and humane drug policies—on your campus, in your community, and in your country.

www.SchoolsNotPrisons.com

The War on Drugs is a War on Progressive Values

“Penalties against possession of a drug should not be more damaging to an individual than the use of the drug itself; and where they are, they should be changed. Nowhere is this more clear than in the laws against possession of marijuana in private for personal use.”

President Jimmy Carter

“I think substance abuse should be treated as a medical problem, not a judicial problem.”

DNC Chairman Howard Dean

“Because our War on Drugs drives up the price, it encourages violence. Prohibition simply doesn't work. It only creates thousands and thousands of Al Capones.”

“Prison should be for people who hurt other people, not themselves. The racism evident in the Drug War, and the clearly preferential treatment for offenders with connections, undermine our concept of a just society. Draconian prison sentences that dwarf those for violent crimes, like murder and rape, destroy respect for our laws.”

Representative Dennis Kucinich (D-OH)



Why are leading progressives speaking out against the War on Drugs?

Human Rights

The United States has the highest per capita prison population in the world. More than 2.2 million people will go to bed behind bars in our country tonight—many of them for nonviolent drug offenses. We incarcerate more people for drug crimes than are imprisoned in Western Europe for all crimes combined. The U.S. has 5% of the world's population but 25% of the world's prisoners.

Racism

Drug War enforcement is racially biased and has a devastating effect on communities of color. Although African Americans comprise only 12% of the population and 13% of drug users, they make up 38% of those arrested for drug offenses and 62% of those convicted of drug offenses. Because of racial profiling and discriminatory enforcement, people of color bear the brunt of our drug laws. One in eight African American men have lost the right to vote because of past convictions. One in three black men alive today can expect to spend time in jail.

Environment

The government's drug crop eradication schemes are not only unsuccessful but pollute the environment. The U.S. spends millions of dollars a year spraying poisons on Colombia in a failed effort to prevent drugs grown there from entering our country. But the poisons created by Monsanto also kill livestock, damage legitimate crops, and contaminate drinking water. Local farmers are pushed further and further into the rain forest to grow their crops on unpolluted lands, leading to increased deforestation.

Homeland Security and Public Safety

Remember those TV commercials claiming that people who use drugs support terrorism? That's a direct result of drug prohibition. Just as Al Capone used illegal alcohol sales to fund his criminal empire, Al Qaeda and other terrorists see drugs as an easy way to finance their appalling activities today.

Because our police are so preoccupied with enforcing drug laws, they often don't have the time or resources to go after murderers, rapists, or other criminals.

"I think that most small amounts of marijuana have been decriminalized in some places, and should be."

President Bill Clinton

"We have never had a legitimate Drug War in the United States. And the reason is that we've never focused properly on treatment and education. We've been mostly focused on the punitive side and interdiction."

"We are imprisoning a bunch of people in the United States of America with automatic sentences and putting nonviolent people away and filling up our jails in the most absurd, ridiculous, overly expensive way. It just doesn't make sense."

Senator John Kerry (D-MA)

The War on Drugs is an abysmal failure that seeps into countless other areas of public policy.

Join Students for Sensible Drug Policy to help formulate next-generation drug policies based on science, compassion, and common sense.

Drug abuse is a real issue that needs to be dealt with seriously, but the War on Drugs only makes our nation's drug problems worse - for users and nonusers alike.

With \$50 billion a year spent on enforcing drug laws, treatment needs continually go unmet. Drug prohibition, like the earlier failed experiment of alcohol prohibition, simply puts drugs in the hands of gangs and drug dealers, who care only about making a profit.

The fact is, there is no drug known to man that becomes safer to the user or to society when its production and distribution are handed over to violent criminal cartels.

Millions of Americans are busted with drugs every year, and the consequences of an arrest don't end with handcuffs and jail cells. Drug convictions follow people for the rest of their lives and oftentimes force them into inescapable cycles of failure.

College students convicted of drug crimes automatically lose their financial aid. Drug convictions can also make people ineligible for food stamps, public housing, and welfare. Many states don't even allow people with certain drug convictions to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

George W. Bush was guaranteed the presidency in 2000 after thousands of Floridians were turned away at the polls—in many cases just because their names were *similar* to people who had lost their voting rights due to past convictions. Nationally, 4.7 million Americans are disenfranchised due to their records.

Thus far, our government has chosen to bury its head in the sand and ignore the \$400 billion worldwide market for illegal drugs.

It's time for real solutions, not more of the same old "tough on drugs" rhetoric.