

THRIVING  
VALUES™



# THE ALLURE OF LEGALIZING MARIJUANA

Helping you separate  
the facts from fiction



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# THE FACTS: OVERSOLD TO VOTERS

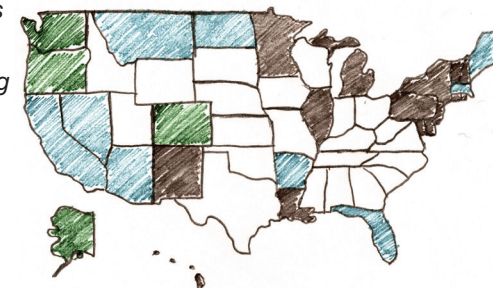
The issue of legalizing marijuana for medical and recreational use is a growing concern, and voters in several states will cast ballots on the legalization question in the General Election.

*On Nov. 8, four states—Arkansas, Florida, Montana and North Dakota—will vote on legalizing marijuana for medical use, while five states—Arizona, California, Maine, Massachusetts and Nevada—will vote on recreational marijuana.*

Twenty-four states and the District of Columbia have already legalized the use of marijuana. Of those, Alaska, Colorado, Oregon and Washington have legalized the drug for use both recreationally and medicinally, while the remaining 20 states only allow medical usage.

After voter approval in 2012, Colorado became one of the first states to legalize recreational marijuana in 2013. This provided an opportunity for the rest of the nation to get a glimpse as to whether the promised benefits would be real, or if the effects of legalization would have an overall negative impact on the state. In less than two years, statistical data gathered by government organizations began to provide that answer.

One of the most appealing claims made during the campaign for legalization was the amount of money the state would receive in tax revenue generated from marijuana sales. However, **the actual income generated fell far short<sup>1</sup>** of what was projected, bringing in just \$69 million of the \$118 million projected by the governor's office. The original claims also failed to factor in the additional expenses to the state in medical costs and drug treatment, increased crime and law enforcement, migration of homeless to the state in order to procure the drug and the cost of lives lost. *In fact, the only ones that seem to be benefitting from this legalization are the large-scale corporate growers.*



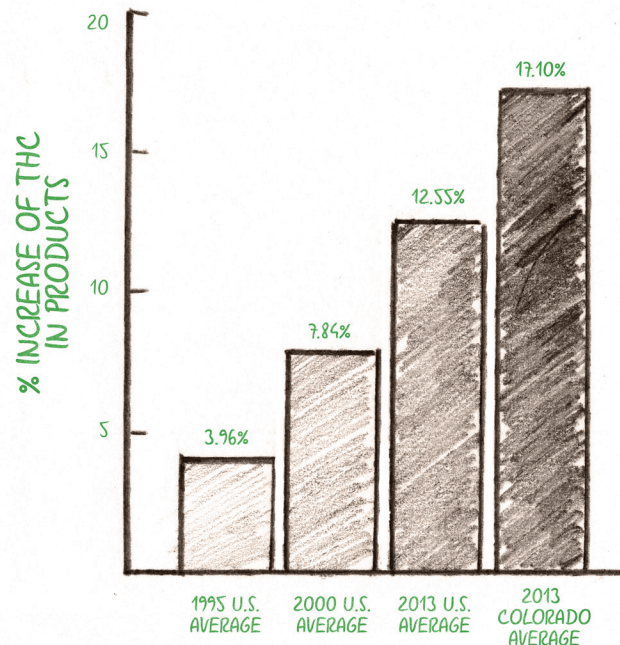
■ LEGAL RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA  
■ LEGAL MEDICAL MARIJUANA  
■ VOTING IN 2016 TO LEGALIZE RECREATIONAL OR MEDICAL

In addition to the monetary shortfalls, studies are beginning to show a high price tag to society. The effects on public health, a rapid rise in crime, increased usage by children and teens, and falling grades and school attendance form clear and unsurprising patterns—patterns that only confirm many of the suspicions that were raised three years ago prior to legalization.

## THE FACTS: NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON PUBLIC HEALTH

Science continues to give us a glimpse into the way marijuana affects users. Over the last 20 years, the research has become increasingly clear about the harms of altering brain chemistry through the use of marijuana and the level of the active ingredient, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), in marijuana products.

INCREASE IN POTENCY OF THC IN MARIJUANA PRODUCTS



Many voters considering marijuana legalization do not realize that this isn't the same weed that first became mainstream in the U.S. in the '60s, '70s and '80s. Marijuana smoke in that era typically contained just 2 percent to 3 percent active THC. Marijuana edibles in Colorado **can have more than 90 percent THC.**<sup>2</sup> Even at the low end, products will contain an average of 17.1 percent THC, making it the equivalent of smoking five or six 1970s joints simultaneously.

Here are just a few of the negative ways marijuana use affects otherwise healthy areas of the body:

- **HEART:** The **risk of a heart attack increases**<sup>3</sup> more than four times in the hour after use, and it can provoke chest pain in patients with heart disease.
- **LUNGS:** Carcinogens contained in the smoke of marijuana can be irritants to the lungs, resulting in greater prevalence of bronchitis, cough and phlegm production. Marijuana smoke contains “substantially higher” levels—**as much as 50 percent more**<sup>4</sup>—of dangerous chemicals than tobacco smoke.
- **BRAIN:** There are at least 60 chemicals in marijuana that impact the human brain, affecting such things as:
- **MEMORY:** Specific areas of the brain responsible for memory, learning, attention and reaction time are significantly—and

“Several times each week, we see people at the emergency department who have ingested marijuana and are acting suicidal.”

—CHRIS COLWELL, M.D.,  
CHIEF OF EMERGENCY MEDICINE  
AT DENVER HEALTH MEDICAL CENTER

negatively—affected. In fact, the negative aftereffects have been seen to persist even after **28 days**<sup>5</sup> since the drug was used.

## SIGNS OF MARIJUANA USE

TETRAHYDROCANNABINOL, ALSO KNOWN AS "THC," IS THE PRINCIPAL PSYCHOTROPIC AND ADDICTIVE SUBSTANCE IN "CANNABIS" OR MARIJUANA. ACCORDING TO NARCONON.ORG, "DESPITE ALL THE MEDIA AND ARTICLES AND PROPONENTS FOR LEGALIZATION, WEED IS ADDICTIVE AND CREATES AN IMPAIRED CONDITION THAT CAN BE DANGEROUS." THAT'S WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO IDENTIFY PHYSICAL AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGES.

### PHYSICAL CHANGES:

BLOODSHOT EYES  
FAST HEART RATE  
SLEEPY, LETHARGIC  
LACK OF COORDINATION  
INCREASED CRAVINGS FOR SNACKS



### BEHAVIORAL CHANGES:

CONFUSION AND LACK OF FOCUS  
UNUSUALLY TALKATIVE  
MISJUDGING TIME  
SECRETIVENESS  
DROPPING STUDIES OR USUAL ACTIVITIES



### PERSONAL BELONGINGS:

PIPES  
SHREDDED LEAFY DEBRIS  
CIGARETTE ROLLING PAPERS



VERY SMALL BOTTLES OF OIL  
SMALL METAL CLIPS  
EYEDROPPERS



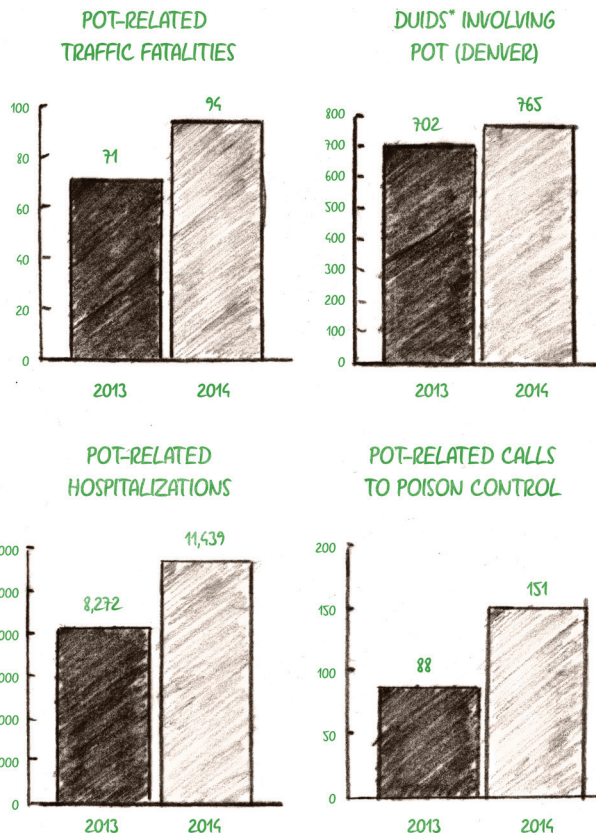
1. **Adolescent Brain Development:** The part of the brain that regulates the planning for complex cognitive behavior, personality expression, decision making and social behavior isn't completely developed until a person is in their mid-20s. As such, teens' developing brains **are especially susceptible**<sup>6</sup> to the effects of marijuana use.

- **PREGNANCY:** Smoking pot during pregnancy **has been shown**<sup>7</sup> to decrease birth weight, affect brain development and cause side effects well into adulthood.
- **SHORT-TERM MENTAL HEALTH:** High doses of marijuana can **cause a temporary psychotic reaction**<sup>8</sup> (not knowing what is real, hallucinations and paranoia), which often leads to suicidal thoughts or action.
- **LONG-TERM MENTAL HEALTH:** There are also links between marijuana use and other **long-term mental health problems**,<sup>9</sup> such as schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and personality disturbances, including a lack of interest in rewarding activities.



## THE FACTS: SOARING CRIME RATES

### COLORADO AND POT-RELATED ISSUES



\* Driving Under the Influence of Drugs

Most advocates of legalizing marijuana for recreational use suggest that one benefit would be reducing or eliminating marijuana on the black market. By controlling the substance at the state level and making it more easily available, the drug cartels and other markets will see demand dry up, according to this theory.

The reality of legalization, however, has proven quite different everywhere it has been tried. When a state legalizes marijuana for recreational use, it has to impose taxes and fees on the sale to fulfill the promise of money for schools or extra law enforcement.

This forces dispensaries to increase costs of marijuana

in order to maintain their profit. The black market, on the other hand, has no such overhead, and continues to thrive by undercutting the prices at commercial dispensaries.

### COLORADO PAYS A HIGH PRICE

Colorado Attorney General Cynthia Coffman said in relation to the black market:

*"The criminals are still selling on the black market. ... We have plenty of cartel activity in Colorado (and) plenty of illegal activity that has not decreased at all."*

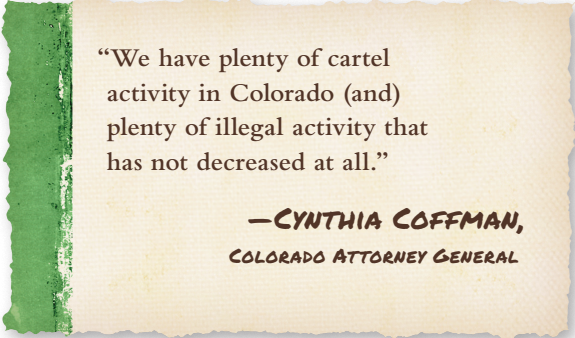
Also indisputable is the fact with legalization comes increased concern for law enforcement, more vehicle accidents in connection with marijuana use, and more deaths—either by suicide or homicide.

- Colorado **marijuana-related traffic deaths increased**<sup>10</sup> 92 percent from 2010–2014. During the same period, all traffic deaths only increased by 8 percent.
- Overall, **crime in Colorado has increased significantly**<sup>11</sup> since the drug was legalized recreationally in 2013. The latest government report shows an overall increase of 4.4 percent in 2015 from the previous year, which

includes a 14.3 percent increase in homicide. The **FBI reports**<sup>12</sup> that the national crime rate decreased 4.3 percent from 2013 levels.

- High school students reported in 2015 that their **top three sources**<sup>13</sup> of the drug are:

1. 39 percent from friends who obtained it legally
2. 30 percent from their parents
3. 18 percent from the black market



“We have plenty of cartel activity in Colorado (and) plenty of illegal activity that has not decreased at all.”

—**CYNTHIA COFFMAN,**  
COLORADO ATTORNEY GENERAL

- **Black-market dispensaries**<sup>14</sup>

operate online in Colorado, selling “cash donations” that just happen to come with a quantity of the drug as well. These dealers deliver product across the entire state. No age confirmation is required with many of these services.

- Numerous reports of marijuana use in Colorado have led to episodes of psychotic activity and subsequent homicide or suicide **including:**<sup>15</sup>

1. After smoking marijuana, 18-year-old Daniel Juarez ran around wildly, stripped naked then stabbed himself with a knife 20 times killing himself.

2. In 2014, Levy Pongi, a 19-year-old student, ingested marijuana edibles before acting irrationally, upending furniture in his hotel room, then running to the hotel balcony and jumping to his death.

3. Kristine Kirk called 911 to report her husband was acting erratically after ingesting marijuana edibles. While she was on the phone with the 911 dispatcher, her husband shot and killed her in front of their three children.

4. Brant Clark, a 17-year-old high school student, committed suicide after ingesting large amounts of marijuana at a party and suffering major psychotic episodes requiring emergency care over a three-day period. A suicide note said, “I wasn’t thinking the night I smoked myself out.”

5. Luke Goodman fatally shot himself after ingesting marijuana. His family said he was acting irrationally after eating the drugged edibles.

6. Nineteen-year-old Mark Chafant was allegedly trying to sell a bag of marijuana to other teenagers when he was shot and killed. Three juveniles were charged with the **2016 crime.**<sup>16</sup>



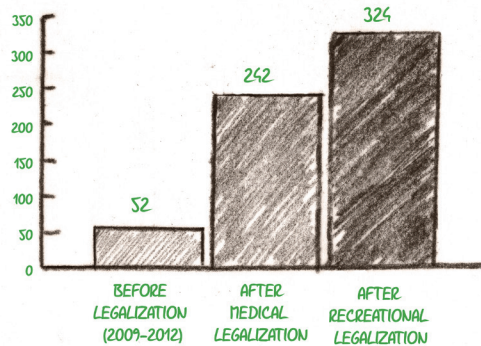
## PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT STILL CONSIDERS MARIJUANA TO BE A CLASS II NARCOTIC DRUG AND ILLEGAL, BUT HERE ARE SOME STARTLING STATISTICS:

2033%

INCREASE IN NUMBER OF MARIJUANA SEIZURES BY THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE (USPS) BETWEEN 2010-2014.

### AVERAGE NUMBER OF SEIZURES PER YEAR



722 lbs

SEIZED BY THE USPS BETWEEN 2010-2014.

260

INTERDICTION SEIZURES IN 2014 OF COLORADO MARIJUANA DESTINED FOR OTHER STATES

- More than 36 states were destined to receive Colorado marijuana. More than half of these **seizures**<sup>17</sup> originated from Denver.

- In Aurora, Colo., the last 10 of 15 drug-related homicide cases were connected to marijuana, according to a **May 2016 report**.<sup>18</sup>
- **Total crime in Denver**<sup>19</sup> is up 10 percent over the first four months of 2016 compared to the same period of 2015. This increase is five times the population growth rate and mirrors similar increases in 2015, 2014 and 2013 since recreational legalization.
- **Data from the Seattle, Wash.**,<sup>20</sup> Police Department shows property crime rates within Seattle have increased more than 25 percent since legalization of marijuana occurred.

- In July 2016, a homeless man from Indiana was taken into police custody after attacking others in broad daylight with a pipe on the popular Denver 16th Street Mall. He later admitted that the **availability of marijuana**<sup>21</sup>

in the Mile High City was one of the reasons he came to Colorado.

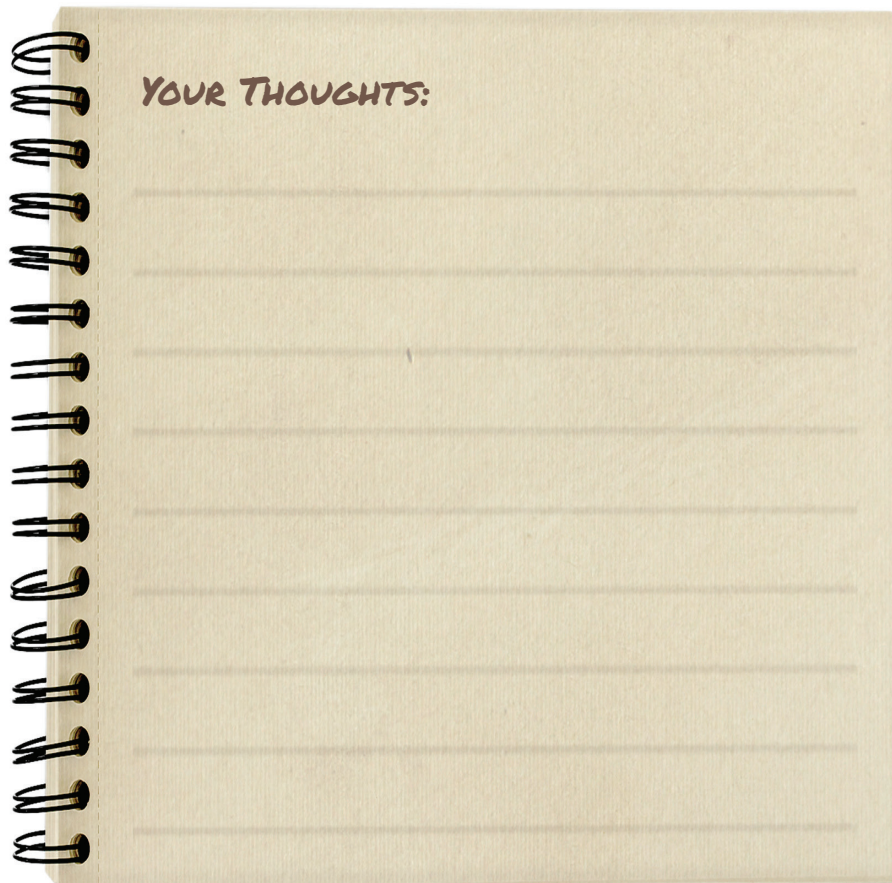
- There are nearly **4,000 homeless**<sup>22</sup> estimated to live in Denver, which is a 10 percent increase in the last two years. **City officials suspect**<sup>23</sup> marijuana legalization has created an increase in homelessness.
- The term “Marijuana Migrants” was coined specifically for the hundreds of individuals who flock to Colorado since legalization of the drug. An informal survey conducted by one Denver homeless shelter found **30 percent of new-to-town homeless came to the city for pot**.<sup>24</sup>
- The town of Aurora, Colo., allows the sale of recreational marijuana and will spend **\$4.5 million**<sup>25</sup> in marijuana revenues on caring for the homeless in its community.

“There is increased crime, sometimes violent crime, associated with legalization of marijuana.”

—GEORGE BRAUCHLER

ARAPAHOE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

- With profit margins of as much as **300 percent**,<sup>26</sup> Colorado's high-grade marijuana is in great demand in other states, leading to a rash of inventive ways to smuggle the substance illegally across the state border



to places like Texas, Utah, Nebraska and Oklahoma. This prompted the attorneys general in Nebraska and Oklahoma to file suit against Colorado, claiming their states were suffering enforcement costs and increased crime due to Colorado's legalization of a federally controlled substance. Though the Supreme Court declined to hear that case, state officials say they are **still considering their options**<sup>27</sup> for dealing with the problem.

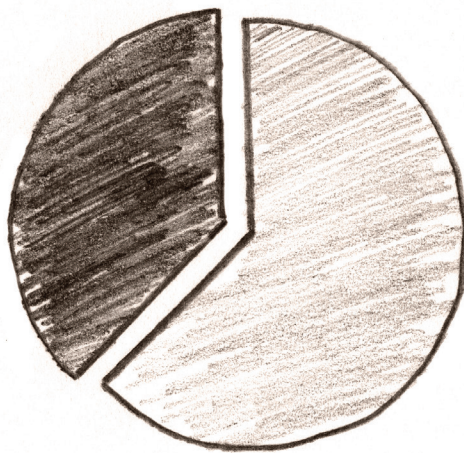
- In 2015, investigators arrested 32 people in various locations across Colorado and seized more than two tons of marijuana and \$10 million in cash from a **single marijuana smuggling operation**.<sup>28</sup> Nearly everyone arrested was from outside Colorado, including from Mexico and Cuba.
- In 2015, state and national congressional **investigations uncovered**<sup>29</sup> welfare and other social benefit money being used to purchase marijuana in Colorado dispensaries.



## THE FACTS: INCREASED USAGE BY CHILDREN AND TEENS

Statistically, Americans use legal drugs far more than illegal drugs because of their accessibility and availability. When looking at a 2014 study, 56.9 percent of people aged 18 or older reported they **drank alcohol**<sup>30</sup> in the past month, while **those who smoke cigarettes**<sup>31</sup> is 16.8 percent. Marijuana, on the other hand, was used by only **8.4 percent**<sup>32</sup> of Americans in the past month.

### MARIJUANA AVAILABILITY IN DENVER



■ 198 LICENSED MARIJUANA DISPENSARIES

■ 117 LICENSED RETAIL PHARMACIES

Greater freedom to buy and use marijuana by adults in Colorado has brought with it a statistical increase in the number of children who have accessed and used the drug, which often results in the child requiring emergency treatment for exposure to marijuana.

Data on drug use shows Colorado “youth past month” marijuana use increased by **20 percent**<sup>33</sup> in the two years since legalization. Several other studies have

“Furthermore, compared with most unintentional pediatric exposures, symptoms after marijuana exposure can be severe: 35% of patients presenting to the hospital required admission, increasing the hospital burden and using more health financial resources.”

—2016 JAMA PEDIATRICS STUDY

proven that regular use of marijuana in teens and youth begins to lower IQ over time, affect memory and judgment, and reduce academic effectiveness at all grade levels. Young users of marijuana are more likely to skip classes in high school and college, or drop out of school entirely.

- **The national average**<sup>34</sup> for youths ages 12 to 17 who used marijuana in the past month is 7.15 percent. In Colorado it’s 11.16 percent.
- In Colorado, **at least 87 children**<sup>35</sup> have been examined at a hospital or reported to poison control for unintentional marijuana exposure between 2014 and 2015. That number is greater than the four previous years combined (76 cases total).

## EDIBLE FORMS:

IN STATES THAT HAVE LEGALIZED MEDICAL OR RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA USE, AN ENTIRE INDUSTRY OF "EDIBLES" HAS QUICKLY EMERGED. HOT OR COLD, AVERAGE OR EXQUISITE, EDIBLES ARE NOW AVAILABLE IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES, MAKING IT MUCH HARDER TO DETECT:



- The **top 10 states**<sup>36</sup> that have the highest rate of current marijuana use among youth (ages 12 to 17) were medical marijuana states. The lowest 10 were states that still had not legalized the drug for medicinal use.

- There was a **40 percent increase**<sup>37</sup> in drug-related suspensions and expulsions in Colorado between pre-legalization 2008/2009 and post-legalization 2013/2014.
- A survey of 188 school counselors in 2015 revealed that **69 percent say**<sup>38</sup> there has been an increase in incidents on campus involving marijuana since Colorado's legalization.
- The **most reported marijuana violations**<sup>39</sup> were: Students being under the influence during school hours; student possession of the drug; students in possession of edibles; and students selling marijuana to other students.

## THE SOLUTION: CLEAR THE SMOKE — TAKE ACTION

Frequent arguments for marijuana legalization include:

- It's a harmless drug.
- The state would receive large revenues from taxation.
- It will reduce or end the black market.
- Strict regulations will keep it out of the hands of children and underage teenagers.

Easily accessible data based on the current state legalization experiment confirms *these arguments are untrue*.

"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior."

—I TIMOTHY 2:1-3 (ESV)



## SO, HOW SHOULD A CHRISTIAN RESPOND?

When it comes to legalizing drugs, we may be tempted to believe that what others put in their bodies shouldn't concern us. However, legalization affects all citizens of the states where it has been implemented—whether in lives lost or the increased costs across state systems (e.g., taxes, utilities, health care, enforcement, school resources, etc.).

*Your vote is a supplication (1 Timothy 2:1-3), an opportunity to speak into the culture for the defense and protection of others who may not realize the result of marijuana legalization.*

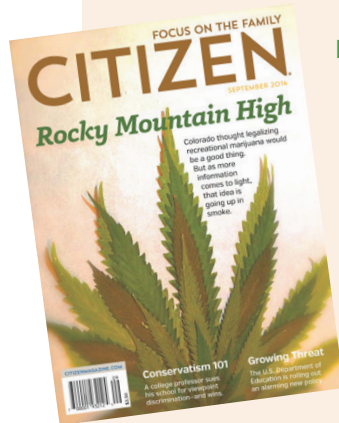
The 2016 election season promises to be a critical year for the future of marijuana legalization. Voters in Arizona, California, Maine, Massachusetts and Nevada will head to the polls to decide whether or not to follow the examples of legalization set by Colorado and Washington in 2013, and Alaska and Oregon in 2015—all of which started with legalized medical marijuana.

These voters will be faced with high-priced pro-legalization campaigns funded by large out-of-state commercial corporations—and they need the facts on the impact of marijuana legalization on their states. You can help in a number of ways:

1. If you're in a state considering the legalization of marijuana, you can make sure you're registered to vote when you access our [Commit2Vote2016.com](http://Commit2Vote2016.com)<sup>42</sup> website. Then consider the information in this guide when you vote.
2. Consider connecting with your state-based Family Policy Council (see [our map](#)<sup>43</sup>) to help them educate like-minded voters.
3. If you know someone who lives in one of the impacted states, please share this informative guide—and help them to separate fact from fiction.

## FREE CITIZEN ARTICLES

Our award-winning *Focus on the Family CITIZEN*® magazine has covered Colorado's legalization of marijuana right from the start.



Read the complimentary, in-depth articles:

**"Growing Like a Weed"**<sup>40</sup>

September 2014 Issue

**"Where's There's Smoke"**<sup>41</sup>

August 2015 Issue

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**FocusOnTheFamily.com/SocialIssues**  
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