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Position Paper

Legalizing Marijuana? A hot issue that has been lighting up the past Youth In Government sessions. Some of you may be saying, "Yeah, man, lets get the party started." While others of you are cringing and waiting to hear what I have to say.

Let's face it, most of us campaigning for this legalization of this cannabis plant are into getting a legal hit without suffering the repercussions that may result. No one wants to get in trouble with the law, and heaven forbid our parents discover us with the "munchies" after an encounter with the grass. But, what we don't realize, or chose to ignore, is the fact that legalizing marijuana would not mean just an easy high for the "recreational users".

In a 1995 study conducted by the National Survey of Drug Use and Health, an estimated 97.5 million Americans from the age of 12 reported trying marijuana at least once. This represents 40.2% of Americans of that age group. In the past month, an estimated 6.8% of Americans aged 12-17 have admitted to marijuana use. However the scarier statistics lie in the fact that this drug opens a door to a world of other drugs.

The term "Gateway Drug" has probably been drilled into your brains due to various anti-addiction programs such as D.A.R.E. In case you have been hiding in a cave before your YIG debut, this means that marijuana users are more likely to try harder drugs after marijuana. In a study done by the center for Addiction and Substance Abuse, people who use marijuana are 85 times more likely to try cocaine. This harder drug can lead the recreational users to become addicts. Heroin today, gone tomorrow.

Honestly, this is no laughing matter. When marijuana is not enough to give the needed fix, users and addicts turn to other forms of drugs to get the desired high. In Montana, 1.5% of the population has used a form of methamphetamine in the past year. This ranks Montana in the second highest usage state behind Nevada. I mean we are closely behind a state that boasts an economy due to gambling and prostitution.

Now, I'm not saying that legalizing marijuana would make it legal for healthy civilians to get the drug. On the contrary, I am stating that any legalization, whether for medicinal purposes or not, would make it easier for those said civilians to obtain possession of the cannabis.

Those of you out there who know all this and are now whining because indeed, I have not yet addressed the fact that marijuana can be used for medicinal purposes, settle down. According to the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970, marijuana was classified at a Schedule I controlled substance. In other words, it is an illegal drug that has no medicinal value. Now, you may be thinking, 1970(!!!!!!!) only my adviser can remember those days, but today it still remains to be proven that marijuana has had good medicinal affects. It has been proven that there are adverse affects such as respiratory problems and memory loss, but tests are still being done to see if there are positive medical affects. Doctors also agree that there are other drugs that can be prescribed to perform the same services that marijuana is assumed, but not proven to provide.

Now, for those of you who remain unconvinced on my point, I will jump through flaming hoops just to prove my sincerity. Seriously though, today while you are a youth in high school, you think that the world is at your fingertips. "YOU ARE INDESTRUCTABLE," is what the media and others in this country want you to believe. However, you are not and while you are trying to joke around about getting a legal high, in 30 years when your kids are your age (if you

are able to have kids because all the weed that you smoked will affect your reproduction, male or female...that sneaky Mary Jane doesn't care who you are) and sitting on the couch, staring into space, stoned out of their mind, you will wish you would have listened to me and taken into account all that is at risk is marijuana is legalized.