

Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police (WASCOP)

Position statement on the legalization of marihuana

Nationwide marijuana is at the center of an ardent debate. The Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs is opposed to any form of legalization of the use of marihuana. The effort to decriminalize marihuana often begins with allowing its use for medical purposes. This tactic has been effective in other states. Proponents play on public sympathies for those suffering significant illness to legalize marihuana use. Medical science has developed FDA-approved, marijuana-based medications that doctors can prescribe for patients undergoing cancer chemotherapy and to stimulate appetite in patients with wasting syndrome due to AIDS. What matters is knowing the facts, marijuana use has personal risks and those under the influence of its intoxicating effects place others in our communities at risk.

- Over 75% of crime in Wyoming involves impairment due to alcohol, why would we as a society add another substance that impairs judgment and motor skills
- Marijuana impairs judgment and motor coordination and slows reaction time, an intoxicated person has an increased chance of being involved in and being responsible for an accident
- Between 2006 and 2011 Colorado traffic fatalities involving drivers testing positive for marihuana increased 114%
- Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the main active ingredient in marijuana the THC content maybe between 8 and 12%
- Is it realistic to believe a doctor would prescribe a “medicine” with no dosage control and no potency control
- Marijuana has the *potential* to promote cancer of the lungs and other parts of the respiratory tract because it contains irritants and carcinogens—up to 70 percent more than tobacco smoke.
- Researchers from the French National Consumers Institute found that smoking three marihuana joints is equivalent to smoking an entire pack of cigarettes, in terms of toxic chemicals inhaled
- Colorado dispensaries sell marihuana under the guise of medicine that is appears to target youth, products such as hard candy, cookies, brownies and fruit flavored sodas all laced with THC
- Marihuana use is addictive and the treatment cost and consequences can fall to the community
- The issue cannot be labeled as an infringement on personal freedom when an impaired persons actions directly affect drivers safety and co-workers safety

The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports the following physical and mental effects from marijuana use:

Consequences of Marijuana Abuse

- **Acute (present during intoxication)**
 - Impairs short-term memory
 - Impairs attention, judgment, and other cognitive functions
 - Impairs coordination and balance
 - Increases heart rate
 - Psychotic episodes
 - **Persistent (lasting longer than intoxication, but may not be permanent)**
 - Impairs memory and learning skills
 - Sleep impairment
 - **Long-term (cumulative effects of chronic abuse)**
 - Can lead to addiction
 - Increases risk of chronic cough, bronchitis
 - Increases risk of schizophrenia in vulnerable individuals
 - May increase risk of anxiety, depression, and amotivational syndrome*
- * These are often reported co-occurring symptoms/disorders with chronic marijuana use. However, research has not yet determined whether marijuana is causal or just associated with these mental problems.