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HEADLINE: Medicinal marijuana a health hazard, hoax

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BODY:

Proposition 59, the D.C. ballot initiative to legalize marijuana for medicinal purposes, must be defeated today for many reasons. Among them:

- * Never in American history has any medicine been approved by public vote.

- * Bypassing the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to approve medicines is a dangerous idea.

- * Proposition 59 requires no prescription and legalizes purchasing, cultivating and distributing marijuana.

- * Anyone can say, "My doctor recommended pot."

- * Children are over 60 percent more likely to be abused in homes where drugs are used.

- * It will increase availability and crime.

- * Of 13,700 completed research projects, not one approves the crude drug marijuana as medicine.

- * One of the 483 chemicals in marijuana, THC, seems useful in treating nausea, but it is a synthetic and available by prescription.

- * Voters will see only five sentences of a four-page, single-spaced initiative.

The FDA acts as a safety mechanism, testing medicines for safety and effectiveness. This guards against opportunists who would sell snake oil or quack medicines for profit.

The effort to legalize marijuana under the hoax that it is medicine takes advantage of a very vulnerable population.

AIDS patients should not be smoking anything. In fact, the National Institutes of Health advises: "People with HIV and others whose immune system is impaired should avoid marijuana use."

Studies of glaucoma showed so clearly that marijuana was not a safe or effective drug for this serious eye disease that all other studies were halted. In fact, glaucoma specialists tell us, "Glaucoma is such a serious, difficult disease you must be extremely cautious even

with FDA-approved prescription medications."

Dr. Robert DuPont, first director of the National Institutes on Drug Abuse, said: "Never in the history of modern medicine has burning leaves been considered medicine. Those in the medicinal-legalization movement are putting on white coats and expressing concern about the sick. But people need to see this for what it is: a fraud and a hoax."

When legalizers sued the Drug Enforcement Administration to get marijuana removed from the list of most dangerous drugs and reclassified as medicine, a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled, in part, that "none of these doctors could identify under oath the scientific studies they swore they relied on. Eventually, each one admitted he was basing his opinion on anecdotal evidence, and his own impressions about the drug."

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University reports a 300 percent increase in marijuana use since 1992. Figures from the Household Senior Survey, University of Michigan, indicate 2.12 million children said they used marijuana in the last month prior to the survey.

That is enough children to fill 1,059 schools with their entire population of 2,000 students using pot. And we are condemning schools and teachers for not producing well-educated kids?

Dr. Gary Cohan, a Los Angeles physician who treats AIDS, puts it this way: "If your doctor recommends marijuana as treatment, you've got a lousy doctor."

We agree. If your doctor gives you a prescription for marijuana, get a new doctor.

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