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HEADLINE: Exposing the medical marijuana hoax

BODY:

Fred Reed's Police Beat column "Still awash in drugs, we need to try a different approach" (Metropolitan, Oct. 4) hits some important points.

Mr. Reed says, "Marijuana is so common that cops often ignore small quantities." This is not what I hear. Both a senior narcotics officer and patrol officers have told me you could get caught with an 18-wheeler load of pot in the District, make a case, and it will not get prosecuted.

Mr. Reed also mentions, "... there are various forms of legalization or decriminalization." Yes, there are. I would suggest Mr. Reed go to California, where the medical marijuana hoax has been implemented in marijuana buyer's clubs. Talk to the officers who are finding 14-year-old children buying pot saying "their doctor recommended it." This is the same medical marijuana hoax currently being pushed in the District.

I, too, have been through administration after administration and watched the non-war on drugs. The truth is, America never declared war on drugs. We declared war on tobacco. President Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno are working hard on that, but we can't get them to speak out on the medical marijuana hoax - even though marijuana has much more cancer-causing tars than tobacco. Gen. Barry McCaffrey, the administration's drug czar, has spoken, but it appears he has little backing from the president.

This is not a Republican or Democrat issue. The hardest I ever worked was to defeat Montgomery County Rep. Newton Steers, who had been convinced by a young staff that marijuana decriminalization was a good option. Fewer than 15 outraged mothers helped send him to a crashing defeat. Mr. Steers later apologized and said that "we were right. I've learned a lot about marijuana."

The closest this country came to a war on drugs was when first lady Nancy Reagan helped parents organize and reduce teen-age drug use 50 percent from 1982 to 1992, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Even Rep. Charles Rangel says he misses Mrs. Reagan on this issue.

Mr. Reed writes, "In the ghetto, drugs are close to being de facto legal. They are easily and cheaply available." Surely no one would suggest we ghettoize the nation by allowing the legalization of drugs. We know what legalization looks like, Mr. Reed. Shame on all of us for not doing a better job of stopping drugs and making the "ghetto" a thing of the past.

Remember, we live in a democracy - a system that only works when its citizens make it work. So, get on the phone and call your congressman, senator or delegate and tell them you

want tougher drug laws, or at least the enforcement of current laws. Rep. James P. Moran and D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton are the leaders in Congress supporting the medical marijuana hoax.

At a recent hearing on the subject before Rep. Ernest Istook, chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee on the District, the room was filled with members of the drug culture. They are working the democratic system. If those opposing legalization don't get into the fray, the legalizers may just win.

Keith Stroup, a well-known pro-legalizer and founder of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) attended the hearing. In a letter to the magazine High Times (Sept. 1979), Mr. Stroup wrote, "There is no particular evidence that even those few young people who smoke a great deal of marijuana necessarily hurt themselves or reduce their level of performance, academic or otherwise." Sadly, thousands of children believed him.

Mr. Stroup later wrote in NORML's 10th anniversary publication, "Most drug sellers today are decent people; they should not be treated like violent criminals." Ask a grandmother who is strapped with raising her grandchildren because the parents are strung out on drugs if she thinks drug sellers are decent people.

You can reach your congressman, senator or delegate by calling 202-225-3121. Let them know how you feel about the medical marijuana hoax.

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Silver Spring

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