Your Support is Steering the Country in a New Direction

Ethan Nadelmann, Executive Director

Thanks to you, drug policy reform is advancing all over the country. You deserve the credit for these incredible developments!

With your support, we’ve hit the tipping point on marijuana legalization. One poll after another confirms that a majority of Americans support legalizing marijuana, while the Obama administration appears to be making a good faith effort to allow Colorado, Washington – and Uruguay – to regulate marijuana in a responsible way.

Supporters like you persuaded the U.S. House of Representatives to vote in favor of ending the federal assault on medical marijuana – the first time either branch of Congress has ever voted in favor of a significant marijuana law reform. DPA also played a pivotal role in New York becoming the 23rd state to allow legal access to medical marijuana and we’re working to improve and implement the new law. Meanwhile, marijuana legalization in Colorado shows encouraging signs of success, including a major decrease in marijuana arrests, millions of dollars of new tax revenue, thousands of new jobs, and decreasing levels of crime.

DPA spearheaded a successful effort to pass one of the nation’s most far-reaching marijuana decriminalization laws. Now we’re working to build on this accomplishment by passing a ballot initiative to legalize marijuana possession in D.C. this November. Voters in Oregon and Alaska, meanwhile, can make their states the 3rd and 4th to legally regulate marijuana this November, while voters in Florida can make their state the first in the South to legalize medical marijuana.

Marijuana legalization isn’t the only drug policy reform a majority of Americans support. A major Pew poll recently confirmed that most Americans are increasingly skeptical of criminalizing people for nothing more than drug possession. In Congress, (Continues on page 2)

Above: A DPA supporter at a rally in Denver calling for an end to the war on drugs.
Exciting Progress for Marijuana Reform in Congress – and Around the Country

Right now, you’re witnessing an historic shift happening in our movement.

Thanks to all the progress we’ve made in states around the country, reform is finally making headway in the nation’s capital. You know you’re making an impact when the U.S. House votes – *for the first time ever* – to pass a major marijuana law reform.

Earlier this year, the House voted to stop funding the Drug Enforcement Administration’s aggressive interference in states with medical marijuana laws. DPA is now working with Senators Rand Paul and Cory Booker to ensure the Senate follows the House’s lead.

But as we make gains, some members of Congress are standing in the way. For example, our opponents in Congress are trying to block the District of Columbia from implementing the marijuana decriminalization law it recently enacted.

Progress is being made but there is still a battle ahead.

Your support also allows us to be on the front lines of reform in the states, where many positive developments are emerging. DPA played a major role in New York becoming the 23rd state to allow legal access to medical marijuana and we’re working to improve and implement the new law. The *Don’t Take Away Our Medicine* Campaign we launched in New Mexico is mobilizing patients to block harmful threats to medical marijuana access and building a coalition of veterans of the armed services who are speaking out for the medical benefits of marijuana.

You’re helping us pass laws, block harmful initiatives, and extend the diversity and reach of our movement to bring drug policy reform to people like you across the country.

Your Support is Steering the Country in a New Direction

(continued from cover)

a bipartisan effort to reform draconian mandatory minimum drug laws is gaining traction. And across the country, religious leaders are calling for an end to the drug war and mass incarceration. (See page 6.)

Most Americans no longer support many of the harshest drug laws yet police and prosecutors persist in going after people, with little regard for decency or justice. Consider the tragic case of Bernard Noble, highlighted on page 3, whose possession of a couple of joints landed him with a 13-year prison sentence in Louisiana. Such heart-breaking stories remain all too common, with more than a million Americans still arrested each year for nothing more than possession.

So, yes, we’re headed in a new direction, but trying to roll back mass incarceration is like trying to turn around an ocean liner – even when you point it in a new direction it still takes a long time to actually reverse course.

With you by our side, we’re not going to stop until we win. I look forward to working with you to keep up the momentum.
Update: With All Eyes on Colorado, DPA Report Reveals Positive Trends

All eyes are on Colorado to gauge the impact of the country’s first-ever law to legally regulate the production, distribution and sale of marijuana, which went into effect last January.

DPA has played a key role in Colorado, including deep involvement in the research, drafting, funding and on-the-ground campaign to pass the state’s groundbreaking legalization law.

So when Colorado reached the six-month anniversary of retail marijuana sales, we harnessed media coverage by releasing a status report analyzing what has been happening with crime rates, marijuana arrests, the economy and traffic safety. What’s working and what is not?

Here’s what we know so far:
- The first four months of legal marijuana sales resulted in $10.8 million in tax revenue.
- Approximately $1.9 million of that will go to improve Colorado’s schools.
- There has also been a 5.2% decrease in violent crime since last year at this time in Denver.
- And, the state is set to save at least $12 million dollars this year alone.

Even as marijuana legalization gains momentum, there are many states where people are still given harsh punishments for simply possessing marijuana.

Bernard Noble is a 48-year old man from Louisiana who was sentenced to 13 years of hard labor in prison with no opportunity for parole – simply for possessing the equivalent of two marijuana cigarettes.

As a father of seven children, including two with special medical needs, he worked hard to financially provide for his family. That will obviously no longer be possible with him behind bars.

If this makes you feel disappointed, bewildered, or just plain angry, you’re not alone.

DPA recently filed an amicus brief urging the Louisiana Supreme Court to review Mr. Noble’s egregious prison sentence. We’re also working to reform the brutal sentencing laws in Louisiana — where multiple convictions for simple marijuana possession can land someone in prison for 20 years.

Bernard’s awful story is a somber reminder that we still have so much work to do.
Updated Safety First Booklet Offers Realistic Approach to Drug Education

As a DPA member, you are supporting drug education that fosters honest, open dialogue about the risks and consequences of drug use. At back-to-school time this fall, we released a new, updated edition of our seminal publication Safety First: A Reality-Based Approach to Teens and Drugs in both English and Spanish.

This unique resource provides guidance on how parents can foster dialogue with their children around the risks and consequences of drug use. So far, more than 350,000 copies of the booklet have been distributed to parents, teachers and school administrators.

This year’s new edition features two new sections on marijuana legalization and the latest developments in adolescent brain research.

No parent wants his or her teenager to use drugs. But to prevent adolescents who do experiment from falling into abusive patterns, we need to create fallback strategies that focus on safety.

You can be proud to know that you are providing parents with the tools needed to evaluate and discuss strategies for protecting their teenagers from substance misuse and addiction. And by helping provide teens with drug education that respects their intelligence and gives them the tools to stay safe and healthy, you are playing an important role in ending some of the worst harms of the drug war.

Taking on the DEA and Demanding Reform

No federal agency better represents the failure of the drug war than the Drug Enforcement Administration. Thanks to our efforts, Congress and the media are finally beginning to look critically at this ineffective and scandal-plagued agency.

DEA Administrator Michele Leonhart’s public statements and the conduct of her agency suggest they are trying hard to undermine the Obama administration’s efforts to undo some of the worst harms of the drug war. DPA and members of Congress are calling on Leonhart to resign.

We’re getting closer to replacing punitive drug policies with humane alternatives.

The Drug Enforcement Administration is also one of the biggest reasons medical marijuana hasn’t yet been legalized at the federal level.

DPA recently released a report, jointly authored with the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, called The DEA: Four Decades of Impeding and Rejecting Science. The report documents the DEA’s longstanding pattern of systematically obstructing scientific research, especially research that could lead to the reclassification of marijuana.

The time is long past for a top-to-bottom review of this rogue agency. The DEA is a police and propaganda agency that should not be in charge of federal decisions involving scientific research and medical practice.

We have a lot of work to do but every day we’re getting closer to replacing punitive drug policies with humane alternatives. We thank DPA supporters like you for helping us take on the DEA and demand reform.
Running to Honor a Lost Friend’s Memory – and to Prevent Tragedies Like His

On June 17, 2013, Zachary Lopian died of an overdose. He was 22 years old.

Such a tragedy obviously left many of his friends and family heartbroken and looking for a way to honor his life in a positive manner. One friend, Alex White, wanted to do something that would help prevent others from ever having to experience such a tragedy – so he decided to raise money to support the work that Drug Policy Alliance’s New Jersey office does for overdose prevention.

“I looked into a number of programs that are somehow involved in dealing with overdoses in New Jersey and it was clear to me that DPA does outstanding work,” Alex told us, “I felt that any money I raised would have the biggest impact being put in their hands.”

In honor and in memory of Zachary, Alex chose to raise money for DPA’s overdose prevention program in New Jersey by getting sponsors to run a marathon, which he ran in April this year.

“I completed the marathon in 3 hours and 56 minutes, below my goal of 4 hours, and I can confidently say that I would not have made it through the last five miles had it not been for the inspiration of Zach’s spirit and the encouragement of my friends and family.”

His efforts were extraordinary. He ended up raising $4,280 from 59 different individuals and families. Alex emphatically said that the generosity of those supporters “means so much to the Lopian family and to Zach’s legacy.”

DPA is fervently committed to working in the hopes that no one ever has to suffer the same fate as Zachary Lopian again.

We would like to extend our great appreciation to Alex for his support of our work. Every dollar he raised is being directly used to help save lives.
Religious Leaders Call for End to Drug War

As a result of your support, we’re working with a broad coalition of religious leaders to fight for the end of the war on drugs and mass incarceration. Earlier this year, DPA orchestrated an unprecedented statement from hundreds of religious leaders calling for a transformation in our nation’s approach to drug use and misuse.

“The war on drugs has become a costly, ineffective and unjust failure,” said Reverend Edwin Sanders, who is a DPA Board Member and the Senior Servant for the Metropolitan Interdenominational Church in Nashville, Tennessee. “We are guided by our religious principles to serve those in need and give voice to those who have been marginalized and stigmatized by unjust policies. We cannot sit silently while a misguided war is waged on entire communities, ostensibly under the guise of combating the very real harms of drug abuse.”

DPA Board Member Reverend Edwin Sanders speaking at DPA’s International Drug Policy Reform Conference last year.

The statement makes the following recommendations:

1) Repeal laws that criminalize drug possession and replace them with policies that expand access to effective health approaches to drug use, including evidence-based drug treatment.

2) Eliminate policies that result in racially disproportionate arrest and incarceration rates.

3) End policies that unjustly exclude people with a record of arrest or conviction from key rights and opportunities.

Thanks to you we are bringing people from all walks of life together under a common cause – ending the drug war and promoting drug policies grounded in science, compassion, health and human rights.

What About the Kids?

Those who would perpetuate the failed drug war talk about wanting to protect the children. But nothing could be further from the truth.

Since New York’s medical marijuana bill was signed, at least two New York children with severe seizure disorders have died. Medical marijuana has dramatically reduced life-threatening seizures in other children with similar conditions. DPA and our allies are pressuring Gov. Cuomo to swiftly implement the program so that no more tragedies like these occur.

These children and their families were at the center of our efforts to pass a medical marijuana law in New York. Despite their children’s illnesses, the life-and-death circumstances they faced daily, and the difficulty of engaging in such intense advocacy with a sick child, these families made the multiple trips to Albany, often with their children, speaking directly with lawmakers about the urgent need for medical marijuana. Their advocacy and their stories moved several elected officials to support the bill.
Building Support Among Spanish-Speaking Audiences

Your support is helping us reach new audiences throughout the U.S. – and even throughout Latin America.

DPA has been deeply involved in recent developments in Latin America, including Uruguay’s successful campaign to become the first country in the world to legalize marijuana. From Mexico to Colombia to Brazil, drug policy reform has gained unprecedented momentum, and you deserve enormous credit for this transformation.

Meanwhile, in the U.S., where the drug war has increasingly become a war against migrant communities, thousands of people are being deported for nothing more than possessing small quantities of drugs, typically marijuana. In fact, nearly 250,000 people were deported for nonviolent drug offenses in just the past six years.

DPA has also partnered with leading Latino advocacy group Presente.org on a poll finding that a substantial majority of California Latinos support reducing penalties for nonviolent drug offenses. This poll will have a major impact as we work to pass the Fair Sentencing Act in California this year.

This past summer, you may have read about the 52,000 unaccompanied children who have fled Central America due to unimaginable violence generated by drug prohibition. DPA responded by enlisting 80 organizations to call for an end to the drug war in order to protect children at home and abroad.

DPA has also expanded our catalog of Spanish-language fact sheets and materials, many of which are available at our Spanish-language landing page: www.drugpolicy.org/es

With your help, we’re extending the diversity and reach of our movement to bring drug policy reform to more people than ever before.

Even now, in the midst of the tragic loss of at least two children, many of these same families are fighting for expedited access to medical marijuana for patients, particularly children with severe seizure disorders, who cannot wait the estimated 18 months it will take to fully implement New York’s full medical marijuana program.

We are not going to stand by while more people die needlessly.
Have You Heard?

Changing Perceptions of Marijuana Use
Thanks to you, marijuana law reform has finally entered the mainstream of U.S. and international politics. But the media continues to recycle the same old stereotypical images of people who use marijuana. Half of American adults have tried marijuana and they can’t possibly all look like stoner stereotypes. That’s why DPA just launched a new library of stock photos of people we know who use marijuana that the media can use for their reports. The photos feature California medical marijuana patients who gave us permission to use their images, and are available on our website for use.

Below are some of the stock photos that we produced and are making available for use in the media.

World Health Organization Calls for Ending Criminalization and Broad Drug Policy Reforms
In a report published this summer, the World Health Organization (WHO) made a clear call for broad drug policy reforms, including decriminalization of drug use, harm reduction practices such as syringe exchange and opioid substitution therapy, and a ban on involuntary treatment for people who use drugs. The WHO recommendations are consistent with the long-standing policy objectives and mission of the Drug Policy Alliance, as well as with a surprisingly broad and rapidly-emerging coalition of stakeholders who are calling for drug decriminalization, including the American Public Health Association, International Red Cross, Organization of American States, NAACP, Human Rights Watch, National Latino Congreso, and the Global Commission on Drug Policy.

Major Poll Reveals American Appetite for Ending Criminalization of Drug Use
There is simply no good basis in science, health or ethics for criminalizing someone solely for drug use. A comprehensive Pew poll released earlier this year confirms that a broad majority of Americans are ready to significantly reduce the role of the criminal justice system in dealing with people who use drugs. Now it’s time to ask the question: why are there still more than a million arrests in the U.S. every year for simple drug possession? With your support, we will ensure that these new poll results accelerate the movement to stop putting nonviolent people behind bars simply because they used or possessed a drug.