

Ailly

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Together, We're Making the World a Better Place

Ethan Nadelmann, Executive Director

Thanks to you, victory is within our grasp.

Last year may have been our best year ever. Oregon, Alaska and D.C. legalized marijuana, our work to prevent drug overdose deaths took off around the country, and we made unprecedented progress toward ending mass incarceration. So what's next?

The magnitude of our many recent victories makes what once appeared impossible – drug policies grounded in science, compassion, health and human rights – seemingly inevitable.

But nothing concerns me more than when people look at what we've accomplished and say "we've won!" The truth is, we may have scored some big wins, but winning the war against the war on drugs is a long way off.

Just because the wind is at our backs doesn't mean our struggle is over. Just because four states have legalized marijuana, doesn't mean the other 46 will inevitably follow suit. Just because Uruguay recently became the first nation to legalize marijuana, doesn't mean the world's other 195 countries will simply fall like dominoes.

As I write, our opponents are preparing not just to block our next steps, but to undermine our victories to legalize marijuana and scale back mass incarceration. But we can thwart every assault as long as you stay with us in this fight.

Just because the wind is at our backs doesn't mean our struggle is over.

When it comes to marijuana legalization, I see our job as basically trying to keep the ball moving down the field. This means ensuring that the states that have legalized marijuana implement their new laws effectively. This also means designing new laws and pushing forward in several more states, most notably California. Even as we make remarkable strides in Congress (see page 2-3) ultimately Congress isn't going to do anything unless states take the lead.

It's important to remember that ending marijuana prohibition is only part of what DPA does. We're deeply involved in

efforts to reduce the number of people arrested and incarcerated for drug law violations – whether it's taking on the bail bond industry, fighting for alternatives to incarceration, working with state and local governments to treat drug use as a health rather than

criminal issue, or playing a pivotal role in sentencing reform efforts in Congress and in California, New Jersey and many other states.

And I'm proud to say we're playing a leadership role in reducing overdose fatalities – an often-overlooked issue where DPA's work has prevented thousands of needless deaths and shaped the public debate.

Together we are creating a more just and humane world. And none of it would be possible without donors like you.

Please stay with us in this fight.



Update from Congress: DPA Leads the Way on Capitol Hill



Bill Piper, Director, National Affairs

I think you'll agree that our sustained effort in Congress is finally starting to pay off.

Unlike the 21st Amendment that repealed alcohol Prohibition, there is no single law or policy whose undoing will end marijuana prohibition. Our battle must be fought on many fronts. This takes an investment of considerable resources over time. My small team in Washington, D.C. is doing everything they can to move us forward, and they couldn't do it without your generous and sustained support.

The Drug Policy Alliance: at the forefront of marijuana reform in Congress

The Drug Policy Alliance has long played a leadership role in moving marijuana law reform forward at the federal level. Over the last decade, we worked with Members of Congress to draft and introduce the first-ever bills legalizing marijuana for medical use, decriminalizing marijuana possession, and ending federal marijuana prohibition.

And we stopped many attempts by drug war extremists to escalate the war on drugs.

2014: A turning point

Last year was a major turning point for marijuana law reform at the federal level. The Drug Policy Alliance worked with several national groups and many of our local and state allies to pass a medical marijuana amendment prohibiting the Department of Justice from undermining state medical marijuana laws.

DPA lobbied dozens of congressional offices, put together a detailed projected vote count to determine which members of Congress should get the most pressure, and worked with amendment sponsors to develop effective messaging. The amendment passed the House, marking the first time Congress ever voted to put a halt to marijuana enforcement.

We also worked to build support for two amendments allowing states to set their own hemp policies, both of which passed. And then we worked to draft an amendment prohibiting the Treasury Department from punishing banks that provide checking accounts and other financial services to medical or non-medical marijuana dispensaries. DPA lobbied dozens of offices and put pressure on swing members of Congress, not only passing the banking amendment but also defeating an amendment that would have cracked down on banks providing assistance to dispensaries.

Buoyed by our success in the House, DPA worked with Senators Rand Paul and Cory Booker to draft and introduce an amendment in the Senate that would have prohibited the DEA from

undermining state medical marijuana laws. Unfortunately the underlying spending bill never made it to the Senate floor, so we were unable to get a vote on the amendment.

We were unable to get the banking amendment inserted into the final spending bill, so we began pursuing another strategy. We worked closely with Senators Rand Paul, Cory Booker, Kirsten Gillibrand and Rep. Dean Heller on an omnibus medical marijuana bill known as the CARERS Act. That bill, introduced in Congress this year, amends the federal Controlled Substances Act to make it legal to grow, use, distribute, and sell marijuana for medical use in states where it is legal. DPA is now putting pressure on senators to cosponsor the CARERS Act, and we hope to force a vote on the House and Senate floors later this year on the banking issue.

Not just marijuana

We're working with legislators from both sides of the aisle to reform mandatory minimum drug laws and other drug war policies.

We're also working on overhauling federal asset forfeiture laws. House and Senate Republicans have said they want to reform federal forfeiture laws this year to better protect property rights and eliminate the perverse financial incentives that warp law enforcement priorities. (For more on DPA's asset forfeiture work, see page 4.)

Taking the fight to Congress's backyard

Finally, it's worth noting that the Drug Policy Alliance played a crucial role in passing D.C.'s Initiative 71, which



Above: Senators Cory Booker (right) and Kirsten Gillibrand (center) joined with ailing children and their families at the Drug Policy Alliance's headquarters to discuss the introduction of the CARERS Act.

legalized marijuana possession and home cultivation. We provided most of the funding for the initiative, hired a full time staffer to build support for it, and got civil rights and criminal justice reform groups to support it. Voters approved it by 70%, but Congress has tried (unsuccessfully so far) to stop it.

The conflict over D.C.'s legalization initiative is bringing unprecedented attention to the issue of marijuana legalization in Congress. While members of Congress have taken steps to stop full-on legalization in D.C., they have chosen to leave D.C.'s medical marijuana program alone – a sign of how mainstream this issue has become.

Looking ahead

The tide is shifting rapidly at the national level in favor of reform. The Republican-controlled House voted five times last year to let states set their own marijuana policies. On the Senate side bipartisan support now exists for overhauling federal marijuana laws, as well as rolling back other excesses of the war on drugs.

The Drug Policy Alliance is positioned to build support on both left and right to pass reform into law. It is essential that we maintain our momentum.

“It’s time to modernize our laws and recognize the health benefits of medical marijuana. The CARERS Act will no longer put politicians between doctors and patients.”

– Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY)
March 10, 2015

Have You Heard?



It's Time to Dump the DEA

For many years DPA has worked to delegitimize the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). We've fought to reduce its power and influence, make agency staff think twice about speaking out against reform, and ultimately overhaul or eliminate the DEA.

In April, we reached a breakthrough when the longtime DEA head, Michele Leonhart, was forced to resign. Many, many thanks to all our supporters – we couldn't have done it without you!

In the past few years we hit the DEA hard – educating and working with Members of Congress to investigate the DEA and reduce its power, generating media every time a new DEA scandal surfaced, and calling attention to the DEA's rampant disregard for science and human rights.

Overthrowing Leonhart is just the beginning. Now the DEA must move past its old fear-mongering ways, and embrace drug policy reform. We're taking the lead on pressuring President Obama to appoint a new DEA head who will do just that.

Taking on Policing-for-Profit

Did you know police are allowed to seize and keep your cash, cars, real estate, and any other property – even if you're never convicted or even charged with a crime? It's called civil asset forfeiture – and if it sounds like legalized burglary, that's because it is.

But thanks to your support, we've created major national momentum for reform. Earlier this month, New Mexico's Republican Governor, Susana Martinez, signed a new law spearheaded by DPA that ends the practice of civil asset forfeiture in the state, which now has the strongest protections against wrongful seizures in the country. In both houses of the U.S. Congress, bipartisan legislation known as the FAIR Act has been introduced that would reform federal civil asset forfeiture laws. Meanwhile, in California, where DPA is co-sponsoring a major forfeiture reform bill, we recently released a new report – *Above the Law: An Investigation of Civil Asset Forfeiture Abuses in California* – that's making headlines and spurring lawmakers to action.

Questions? Feedback?

We love to hear from you. Contact the *Ally* by writing to publications manager Jag Davies at: newsletter@drugpolicy.org

www.drugpolicy.org

We are
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