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Thank You For Joining the Drug War Resistance

We are at a paradoxical moment in our fight against the war on drugs.

On the one hand, marijuana legalization is moving forward rapidly, and there is bipartisan support for reducing the amount of people behind bars and promoting health-based approaches to reducing the harms of drugs.

On the other hand, we have a new president and administration that aims to ramp up the disastrous drug war. The pain and misery caused by the war on drugs is as great as ever.

It is your support that will keep us moving forward, even in the face of new obstacles placed in our way.

Our commander-in-chief has not just called for doubling down on draconian drug laws – he has also called for more private prisons, rejected restoring the right to vote for millions of Americans living with a felony conviction, and supported unconstitutional “stop and frisk” policing. He’s even said he’ll deal with opioid addiction by building a wall at the U.S.-Mexico border. In perhaps the most chilling sign, the President has expressed support for Philippine

President Rodrigo Duterte’s campaign of mass murder of poor people suspected of using or selling drugs.

Our president’s explicit appeals to the most racist, xenophobic elements of American society are especially foreboding given the drug war’s racist, xenophobic origins and the ongoing, disproportionate targeting, arrest, conviction and incarceration of people of color for drug law violations.

Some people are still hoping Trump might at least make good on his campaign promise to let marijuana legalization play out at the state

level – but that appears unlikely given that his handpicked Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, is a drug war extremist with a career-long history of racist comments and actions.

In recent years, Sessions played a critical role in blocking efforts to reform sentencing policy, asset forfeiture, and marijuana laws. He’s already taken steps to escalate the war on drugs by undermining civil rights, stifling state-level marijuana reforms that have

Above: DPA’s asha bandele (right), with U.S. Representative Maxine Waters and Dr. Marc Lamont Hill at “Not One Step Back: The Drug War, Mass Incarceration and Public Health in The Age of Trump,” a one-day public strategy session organized by DPA at Atlanta’s Morehouse School of Medicine.

drastically reduced arrests in communities of color, and rolling back any progress in policing and criminal justice made by the Obama administration. The challenge we face was put into sharp relief in May, when in a reversal of Obama-era progress, Sessions announced a new directive to increase the use of draconian mandatory minimum sentences.

The rest of the Cabinet is not much better than Sessions. General John Kelley, head of the Department of Homeland Security, previously oversaw drug war efforts in Latin America and is a true believer in the drug war. Tom Price, Trump’s director of health and human services, has consistently opposed medical marijuana. His healthcare plan would no longer require insurers to cover addiction treatment, which would be a profoundly destructive step backward.

It was our leadership that helped end marijuana prohibition in California and three other states this past year. It was our vision that helped us pass overdose prevention and asset forfeiture reform in states across the country. And it is your support that will keep us moving forward, even in the face of new obstacles placed in our way.

The end of the war on drugs is still within our grasp. But we must reach for it together.

New Jersey's Historic Bail Reform Law is Now in Effect and It's Already Keeping Thousands Out of Jail



Roseanne Scotti
New Jersey State Director

In these challenging times, it is important to celebrate our victories in the fields of criminal justice, civil rights and racial justice.

In 2014, with your help, the Drug Policy Alliance was successful in getting major bail reform legislation enacted in New Jersey. This will significantly reduce the number of people behind bars for nothing more than a low-level drug law violation. The law went into effect on January 1 and the statistics so far are impressive, as you may have seen in a recent front page story in the *New York Times*.

Under New Jersey's old system, three-quarters of the people in jail were there awaiting trial, rather than serving a sentence. The average length of time they spent in jail pending trial was

10 months. New Jersey's reliance on money bail was the main reason people languished behind bars while awaiting trial prior to January 1.

Money bail is inherently discriminatory. People with financial resources, regardless of their risk to public safety, can pay for their freedom by posting money bail. Those without money, no matter how minor their offense, are left to rot in jail for months and even years until trial. While in jail, they lose jobs, housing, and connections to their families and communities.

Under New Jersey's new system, people are given a risk assessment and most are released on nonfinancial conditions and monitored in the community pending trial. In the first month alone:

- Of the 3,382 people arrested in the first month of bail reform, money bail was set in only three cases (less than .001 percent).
- Of the 3,382 cases only 283 of those people were detained pending trial (less than 10 percent). For anyone detained there are now clear, set timelines that prosecutors have to meet rather than a vague undefined "right to a speedy trial" that often extended for years of incarceration.
- All of these cases were processed within 24-48 hours. Because it doesn't take long for something bad to happen to someone in jail. #sandrabland

And these stats don't take into account the fact that New Jersey has increased the use of summonses as part of bail reform, allowing many other people who previously would have gone to jail to simply be given a summons at the police station and then be immediately released.

What do these numbers mean in real people's lives? Previously, 40 percent of the people in New Jersey's jails were there solely because they lacked the money to post bail and obtain release pending trial. Three-quarters of those held were people of color. That system is gone.

Now:

- People will NOT rot in jail for months and even years just because they are too poor to pay money bail.
- People will NOT plead guilty to an offense they didn't commit or take any bad deal the prosecutor offers just because they are desperate to get out of a cell.
- People will NOT spend agonizing months in jail only to be released, broken and in pain, when charges are dropped.
- People WILL return to their homes, their families, their jobs and their communities pending trial. Thousands of people.

And working together we did this. The Drug Policy Alliance planned the bail reform campaign, developed the messaging and strategy, drafted the legislation and built the coalition to support the reform. **We took on the multi-billion dollar commercial bail industry and won.**

Following in the footsteps of this first-of-its-kind reform, states across the country such as California, Texas, Maryland and New York are now also considering similar changes to their bail systems.

Although it is difficult to see it sometimes, the arc of the moral universe does bend toward justice. And working together, the Drug Policy Alliance and our partners are part of the force bending it.

DPA in the News

BuzzFeed

Congress Moves To Expand Drug Testing Of People Seeking Unemployment Benefits

“It’s appalling that instead of helping people who have lost their jobs, the Republican leadership in Congress is choosing to drug test them,” said **Grant Smith**, deputy director of national affairs with the Drug Policy Alliance, which advocates for drug-related policy reform. “It’s shameful that Congress would demonize people who use drugs, especially when there has been so much recent rhetoric about helping people who struggle with opioid and other forms of addiction.”

THE ROOT

Not One Step Back: Drug Policy Alliance’s **asha bandele** Talks Mass Incarceration, War on Drugs, Why She Goes Hard for Justice

“We don’t want the Trump administration going into Colorado, or any of the other states where marijuana has been legalized, and start arresting people again. We don’t want people being deported. All these issues are on the table with this administration, so we’re going to have to play some defense. When they go low, we go hard. We don’t give up ground. We’re not taking one step back.”

U.S. News & WORLD REPORT

Justice Demands We Stop Jeff Sessions

“For noncitizens, including legal permanent residents, most drug law violations can trigger automatic detention and deportation, often without the possibility of return. Every year since 2008, roughly 40,000 people have been deported from the U.S. for drug law violations – many for simple marijuana possession. And that was without an attorney general who was openly hostile to immigrants and people who use drugs.” – **Bill Piper**, Senior Director of National Affairs

The New York Times

New Jersey Alters Its Bail System and Opens Legal Landscape

A study by the Drug Policy Alliance in New Jersey, released in 2013, found that 39 percent of inmates were eligible to be released on bail, but that many could not meet amounts as low as \$2,500. “Large numbers of people were in our jails for weeks or months for low-level offenses,” said **Roseanne Scotti**, the New Jersey state director of the Drug Policy Alliance, a nonprofit advocacy group. “They are innocent until proven guilty, but their whole lives are derailed. While they are in there, they lose homes and jobs and contact with their families. But if you have money, you can walk.”

The Washington Post

The definitive guide to what experts know about the effects of marijuana use

“This report is vindication for all the many researchers, patients and health care providers who have long understood the benefits of medical marijuana,” said **Michael Collins**, the group’s deputy director of national affairs. “To have such a thorough review of the evidence conclude that there are benefits to medical marijuana should boost the case for federal reform.”

Los Angeles Times

Rift opens between the Brown administration and legislators over new marijuana laws in California

“We believe that open distribution is the best way to ensure that small- and medium-sized businesses have access to the market and consumers,” said **Lynne Lyman**, California state director of the Drug Policy Alliance, which co-wrote Proposition 64. While Lyman has heard that lawmakers may try to obstruct the Brown proposals, she argued that legislators have an obligation to defer to Proposition 64, which was approved by 57% of voters in the state.



International Drug Policy Reform Conference

OCT 11-14 2017 Atlanta, GA

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The Reform Conference is the best opportunity to learn about drug policy and to strategize and mobilize reform.

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ETHAN

NADELMANN

LEADERSHIP

SOCIETY

The Drug Policy Alliance is excited to announce the Ethan Nadelmann Leadership Society, named for our visionary founder and former executive director. Your donation of \$1,000 or more will entitle you to membership benefits including invitations to events, lectures, and forums, an exclusive reception at the 2017 Reform Conference in Atlanta, opportunities to engage with DPA staff and support local initiatives, optional listing in our Annual Report,

and a special gift. Honor our legacy and invest in our future by joining like-minded people passionate about drug policy reform. For more information, please contact Elizabeth Sarnoff at esarnoff@drugpolicy.org or 646.598.2188.

Questions? Feedback?

We love to hear from you. Contact the *Ally* by writing to Jag Davies, Director of Communications Strategy, at: newsletter@drugpolicy.org

drugpolicy.org

**We are
the Drug
Policy
Alliance.**