July Newsletter

Groundbreaking Drug Decriminalization And Treatment Measure Qualifies For November Ballot

The Oregon Secretary of State has confirmed that our partners in Oregon have more than enough signatures for The Drug Addiction Treatment and Recovery Act to make it on the November ballot. This groundbreaking measure would decriminalize simple drug possession and expand access across the state to drug treatment and health services, paid for with a portion of taxes from legal marijuana sales. The ballot initiative campaign is backed by Drug Policy Action, the advocacy and political arm of the Drug Policy Alliance.

Simple drug possession remains the single most arrested offense in the country. Policing and enforcement of the drug war has always been racially targeted, with a particularly cruel impact on generations of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people. And incarceration is also a dangerous vulnerability in the fight against COVID-19 – for people in jails and prisons and in the surrounding community.

This measure imagines a better way forward - instead of arresting and jailing people for drugs, it will offer help to those who need and want it. In this moment of a pandemic and collective action against systemic racism, drug policy reform is more urgent than ever.

The initiative has been endorsed by more than 50 organizations, including ACLU Oregon, Human Rights Watch, United Seniors of Oregon, and Unite Oregon.

Read more

"There Is No Naloxone for Racism" - Kassandra Frederique Speaks Out

Since George Floyd was horrifically murdered by Minneapolis police on May 25,
events have unfolded dramatically, and amid worldwide protests, conversations about police brutality and racism – and responses from defunding to abolition – have become mainstream like never before.

DPA's Managing Director of Policy Advocacy & Campaigns, Kassandra Frederique, issued a statement in response to Floyd’s death: “With George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless others before them, perceived drug possession and drug use served as a justification by law enforcement to dehumanize, strip dignity from, and ultimately kill people of color.”

“Drug involvement – whether perceived or real – has provided a convenient excuse for these violent and too often fatal law enforcement interactions. DPA will continue fighting to remove drug involvement as a cover for disregarding the dignity and sanctity of human life. And we will challenge and hold these institutions accountable.”

Frederique, who will take on the role of DPA’s Executive Director in September, spoke with Filter to elaborate on her perspective:

“While the drug war might be the most present factor that is criminalizing, harming and killing our folks, there are multiple other issues that are happening in the lives of our people that are exacerbating the fact that the drug war is present in their lives. It can be housing, it can be unemployment, it can be mental health, it can be food insecurity, it can be so many different issues. The drug war, though most present in some of our lives, is not acting alone.

When it comes to racism, the drug war is most certainly not acting alone. The drug war is acting as a force multiplier in the everyday lives of people, and our strategies and our campaigns and our messaging have to take that into account. Ending the drug war will not end racism, just like legalizing marijuana did not legalize Black people. So we can’t say it will, and we have to build out the capacity to understand what else is going to be necessary to care about the people we care about.”

Read the full interview.

Lester Grinspoon, Influential Marijuana Scholar, Dies at 92

Dr. Lester Grinspoon, a Harvard psychiatry professor who became a leading proponent of legalizing marijuana in the 1970s, died on June 25 at his home in Newton, Massachusetts. He was 92.
“The greatest potential for social harm lies in the scarring of so many young people and the reactive, institutional damages that are direct products of present marijuana laws,” Dr. Grinspoon wrote in his 1971 book, Marihuana Reconsidered. “If we are to avoid having this harm reach the proportions of a real national disaster within the next decade, we must move to make the social use of marijuana legal.”

In 1990, Dr. Grinspoon won the Alfred R. Lindesmith Award for Achievement in the Field of Scholarship from the Drug Policy Foundation, DPA’s predecessor organization. DPA is immensely grateful for Dr. Grinspoon’s contribution to the drug policy reform movement.

Read more about Dr. Grinspoon's life and legacy.

DPA Clips, Podcasts, and Stories

Pleasure, Delayed: This Juneteenth Should Include Freedom to Use Drugs

How can we center Black joy and pleasure, and give room to our people who seek pleasure with drugs? To answer this question, Alexis Martin, DPA's Development Manager, wrote an op-ed for Filter on the fear, anger, and hope she has felt during the months of COVID-19 lockdown and the increasing momentum of the Black Lives Matter movement.

This year, Juneteenth took its rightful place as a more meaningful celebration of freedom than July 4 ever could be. It was a day for rest, celebration, webinars, and parties alike devoted to Black freedom, and, I hope, pleasure. Included in that pleasure should be a freedom to use drugs in whichever way we desire – something that has been denied to Black people in this country for its entire history.

For some, pleasure may be difficult to imagine right now. Reflecting on this year’s Juneteenth memorials, I’ve asked myself: Have you felt pleasure in the last three months?

I’ve certainly felt moments of hope. In the last two weeks, amidst pain and anger, I’ve felt excitement for a future I thought was only possible in my wildest dreams, where violent state forces and the institutions such as the
drug war that empower them are abolished. And hope that in their wake, we
are able to replace them with systems of community care and
understanding, strengthened by the reallocated resources.

But pleasure? Like many Black Americans, who have been
disproportionately struck by COVID, I’ve been sick for over three months.
Just as I was beginning to reckon with the pain of not being able to
comfortably breathe for so long, and with the collective loss of so many
people the world over, the never-healed wounds of police violence were
ripped open yet again. The renewed chants of “I can’t breathe” – perfectly
encapsulating two pandemics that steal the life-force of Black people – rang
on my block, as the protests I couldn’t physically join marched past my
window, with the helicopters of the police state ever-buzzing above.

Read the full article.

**DPA's Richard Burns Honored by Crain's**

DPA's Interim Executive Director, Richard Burns, was recently honored by
Crain's as one of the most notable LGBTQ leaders and executives in New
York. The [announcement](#), made during Pride month, notes Richard's
impactful roles as leader of an array of organizations, including Lambda
Legal, the Johnson Family Foundation, Funder for LGBTQ Issues, and the
Stonewall Community Foundation.

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**COVID-19 & drug policy:** a new discussion series
from the Drug Policy Alliance

- **MAY 7**
  - Decarceration
- **MAY 20**
  - Reentry
- **JUNE 11**
  - Treatment
- **JUL 9**
  - Informal & gig economies
- **JUL 23**
  - Safe supply & legal regulation
- **AUG 6**
  - Drug war policing & surveillance

How does COVID-19 exacerbate the pre-existing conditions of the drug war?
Join us for an online discussion series. Follow @DrugPolicyOrg for details.
DPA is hosting a series of online discussions about COVID-19 and drug policy. To register for the rest of our discussions, click here.

**TAKE ACTION: Tell Congress to Stop Using the DEA to Surveil Protestors**

DPA is leading the coalition calling for an end to the Trump administration’s use of the DEA to surveil protesters. Join us by telling Congress it’s time hold the DEA accountable.

The coalition sent a letter to Congress supporting House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) and Subcommittee on Crime Chair Karen Bass (D-CA) in their call to halt the Trump Administration’s use of Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) resources to enforce laws that bear no relationship to drugs, particularly its plan to investigate events surrounding the nationwide protests of police misconduct that have taken place in recent weeks.

“The DEA has once again stretched and misused its authority in a way that expands the police state,” said Maritza Perez, Director of the Office of National Affairs for DPA. “While we unequivocally think the DEA should be abolished altogether, right now we at least need to make sure the harm they are capable of causing stays within the confines of its Congressionally authorized activities and does not further encroach on American’s civil liberties, like protesting the kind of injustices the DEA itself has also been known to perpetrate.”

Take action and urge Congress to hold an oversight hearing and take away the DEA’s new policing powers.

**Take Action**

**Drug Policy in the News**

*Tripel Pundit*: Going Beyond Police Reform: This Group Urges a Complete Rethink

*Filter*: Thank Earlier LGBTQ+ Activists for the Marijuana Wins We Enjoy Today

*Capital Gazette*: Annapolis Author, Jessie Dunleavy, Releases a
Memoir Remembering Her Son and the Poems He Left Behind

Forbes: Drug Arrests Still Costing NYC Millions as Residents Beg For Aid, Freedom For City Families

Leafly: Oregon Could Decriminalize All Drugs in November Election

Yahoo: Trump’s Drug Czar Makes Case for Border Wall Being ‘A Force Multiplier’

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Put DPA in your will or estate plan. Find out more about how to join The Ashawna Hailey Planned Giving Society today.

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