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# Should marijuana be legalized? If it must be, do it right

By EDWARD L. MARCUS  
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*Cody Roberts (middle) and Joseph Toth (right), advocates for the legalization of marijuana, walk through the hall of the Legislative Office building past Connecticut State Sen. Craig Miner on opening day of the 2018 legislative session. (Mark Mirko / Hartford Courant)*

My personal knowledge of the actual use of marijuana is very limited. I am a non-smoker, and ingesting a foreign substance into my lungs just is not for me. The two times that I tried smoking pot were over 40 years ago in a different state. I would rather have a glass of wine.

That being said, I do come down on the side of supporting its recreational use — subject to sensible and necessary restrictions.

I do understand all the arguments against it, and they do have some merit behind them.

Marijuana can be “a gateway drug” for some people and may lead to a decision to experiment with those higher-potency drugs that can be addicting and ruin people’s lives. Of course the same argument can and has been used about alcohol. Prohibition was a complete disaster — except for the bootleggers who [became rich](#) and founded dynasties.

Like just about anything, legalized marijuana can go to extremes, including the trading of wedding day champagne for nuptial bong hits. The first cannabis wedding exposition was held in Los Angeles last year to talk about and plan for weed weddings.

The bottom line: it is all in the details. Legislation authorizing recreational marijuana must be carefully crafted to protect our citizenry as best as may be possible.

Legislation recently introduced would appear to grant existing facilities, “those that currently sell marijuana only for medical purposes and hold licenses to do so,” the first opportunity to sell recreational marijuana.

I do not believe that it is the right way to go. It is true that the people who are currently licensed have undergone an investigation and passed it. However, I would not like to see the legislation create marijuana millionaires and a marijuana monopoly.

The licensing should be more along the lines of the requirements for a liquor store and should afford the same rights that municipalities have regarding the sale of alcohol to restrict their existence.

The main reason that puts me on the side of supporting legislation for recreational marijuana is the potential for major tax revenue both for the state and for municipalities. I have heard estimates as high as \$180 [million](#) in [tax](#) revenue for the state, funds badly needed to balance the budget.

I live in Branford, an extremely well-run town, with Jamie Cosgrove as its first selectman doing a great job. I say this because the use of marijuana is currently so prevalent that when I walk my dogs on the Trolley Trail in Branford in late spring and summer around 6 p.m., the smell of marijuana is in some parts of the walk almost overwhelming. Where the smokers get it from, I don't know, but it is certainly out there -- even in towns like Branford, which has an outstanding police department.

The point is that marijuana has been and is used recreationally regardless of any legislation that may approve it. Why not approve it and create a new, important stream of income for the state, have quality [control](#) at the same time and take the sale of marijuana out of the hands of criminals?

Like all controversial issues, there will not be unanimity — but I believe there will be enough votes in the legislature to approve recreational marijuana, with appropriate restrictions. My guess is that it will happen this session.

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