

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

FACTS

Tens of thousands of patients nationwide — people with AIDS, cancer, glaucoma, and multiple sclerosis — are already using marijuana to treat their symptoms.

Notable patients who admit to having illegally used medicinal marijuana include *National Review* editor Richard Brookhiser, scientist Stephen Jay Gould, San Francisco Assistant District Attorney Keith Vines, and the daughter of Reagan administration official Lyn Nofziger.

Presently, patients can be arrested and sent to prison for using marijuana — even those who have their doctors' approval.

The federal penalty for possessing one joint is up to one year in prison, and the penalty for growing one plant is up to five years.* And a medical need is no excuse.

*21 U.S.C. 844 and 841(b)(1)(D).

The vast majority of Americans support legal access to medicinal marijuana.

For example, an ABC News/Discovery News poll released on May 29, 1997, found that 69% of American adults support “legalizing medical use of marijuana”; and a Family Research Council survey released on June 18, 1997, found that 74% of the respondents agreed with the statement, “People who find that marijuana is effective for their medical condition should be able to use it legally.”

Since 1996, medicinal marijuana ballot initiatives have received a majority of votes in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington state.

A 1990 scientific survey found that 54% of oncologists with an opinion favored the controlled availability of marijuana, and 44% had already broken the law by suggesting at least once that a patient obtain marijuana illegally.*

*Doblin and Kleiman, “Marijuana as Antiemetic Medicine,” *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, 9,1991; Pp. 1314-1319.

Numerous organizations have recently taken positions in support of legal access to medicinal marijuana and/or opposing the criminalization of medicinal marijuana-using patients, including:

AIDS Action Council, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Bar Association, American Public Health Association, California Medical Association, California Legislative Council for Older Americans, California Pharmacists Association, California Society of Addiction Medicine, *Consumer Reports* magazine, Lymphoma Foundation of America, Multiple Sclerosis California Action Network, National Association of People With AIDS, the *New England Journal of Medicine* and several state Nurses Associations (e.g., California, New York, and Virginia).*

*These and other organizations' positions are available from the Marijuana Policy Project Foundation.

The FBI reports a total of 734,498 marijuana arrests in 2000 — the highest total in U.S. history — 88% of which were for possession.* More than 10 million marijuana users have been arrested since 1970. If only 1% of these people were using marijuana medicinally, then there have been 100,000 patients arrested since 1970!

* *Crime in the United States: 2000* FBI's division of Uniform Crime Reports; Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, October 2001.