

A SPECIAL THANKS FROM THE EDITORS

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Best wishes and happy holidays,
Amy Hruby & Julia Dent

Marijuana Legalized in C.O. and W.A.

Monique Kreisman staff writer

In the November election, several ballot initiatives to legalize possession of marijuana were put to the vote. In Colorado and Washington, they passed. Amendment 64 to the Colorado Constitution allows adults over 21 to possess an ounce of marijuana, and every person can now personally grow up to six marijuana plants. Initiative 502 in Washington also allows adults over 21 to possess an ounce of marijuana, and it sets up a system of regulation in which only state licensed providers may sell the drug, similar to the systems some states have to regulate the sale of alcohol. The Washington initiative also defines a blood test limit for driving under the influence of marijuana, but the Colorado amendment leaves that policy to be resolved. Both laws prohibit smoking in public.

Voters were perhaps convinced by the promising revenue expected from taxation of marijuana. The Washington initiative will tax the drug at 25% when it is transferred from the grower to the processor, from the processor to the retailer, and from the retailer to the customer, for a total of three 25% taxes on all marijuana sales. Revenue estimates for Washington are as high as \$500 million a year. Amendment

64 in Colorado will only tax wholesale marijuana at 15%, but it could still bring in \$60 million a year. Additionally, millions could be saved in police resources that previously went towards apprehending marijuana users.

Another benefit cited by legalization proponents is the blow it will deal to drug cartels. A report estimated that the Washington law alone could cut the cartel's income by over \$1 billion. As the cartel loses business and declines, the war on drugs could slow, and the federal government would save money that otherwise would be spent investigating cartel crimes

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related to illegal marijuana sales.

Although there are certainly benefits associated with legalizing marijuana, there are also risks involved.

Opponents of the

laws cite traffic safety concerns. Like alcohol, marijuana causes dizziness and slowed reaction time. Current laws against driving while impaired apply to alcohol, marijuana and other drugs, but marijuana impairment is very difficult to test. THC, the active chemical in marijuana, can only be detected in a blood test, and levels drop within hours. Five nanograms per milliliter of blood is roughly equivalent

to the .08 blood alcohol content limit, which indicates legal impairment. Washington has set its THC limit at five nanograms, but Colorado has yet to determine a driving standard. Such a standard would be difficult or nearly impossible to set activists argue because by its nature, it is so unlike alcohol standards. Scientists can and have determined how much alcohol it would take to raise the BAC to .08. Based on their weight, people can look up how many of a certain kind of drink it would take to reach the limit. For marijuana, no such information exists. There would be no way for a smoker to know how much of the drug would bring him over the five nanograms limit, so, if he drives, it would be impossible for him to know if he is breaking the law.

Another huge problem with the laws is that they may not even be legitimate. Marijuana is still a controlled substance under federal law, and the Colorado U.S. Attorney's Office released a press statement saying that its position on marijuana is "unchanged." Smokers in Colorado may still be prosecuted by the federal government, even though the state constitution now permits possession of the drug. It is anticipated that the issue will be brought to the Supreme Court for resolution of this state constitution vs. federal law conflict.

Winter Events (cont.)

former boss John Hartford's On Christmas Eve, Giddens and Sypher doing O Holy Night as a stark and stunning bass and voice duet, and Newberry's new holiday hymn On This Christmas Day. The Gathering is a "coming together," a true collaboration of singers, instrumentalists and songwriters from a variety of traditional music backgrounds. Admission is \$27 to \$29.

Holiday Pops: A Pink Martini Christmas

Dec. 21-22
Meymandi Concert Hall, Raleigh

Pink Martini is a jazz/samba/lounge/pop ensemble. Enjoy highlights from the band's 2010 album Joy to the World, which crisscrosses various genres, including Latin, samba, jazz, classical and old-fashioned pop. The show starts at 8 p.m. on Dec. 21 and with two shows on Dec. 22 at 3 and 8 p.m. Concert tickets are available at the door one hour prior to the concert start time.

First in Flight Cat Club 11th annual "Meowing in the New Year" TICA Cat Show

Dec. 28-30
Holshouser Building, NC State Fair Grounds

Come see 250 cats and kittens, both



The N. C. Symphony at last year's "A Carolina Christmas"
Image via ncsymphony.org

pedigree and household pets, in competition. This three day TICA cat show is open Friday 2 to 9 p.m., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. There will be vendors at the event selling items for your feline friends. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for Senior Citizens and Students with ID and \$2 ages two to 12 years old.

First Night Raleigh

Dec. 31, 2012-Jan. 1, 2013 2 p.m. to midnight
Downtown Raleigh

First Night Raleigh is the New Year's

celebration of the arts and community, which features 28 indoor and outdoor venues throughout downtown Raleigh. The festival includes early afternoon Children's Celebration, early and late countdown, the People's procession, music, dance, theater, the giant Acorn Drop and fireworks. Admission buttons are \$9 and can be bought in advance beginning Dec. 1 at Harris Teeter and Etix for children ages six to 12 and adults. Children ages five and under are admitted free. At the event admission will cost \$10 for children ages six to 12 and \$12 for adults.