

# Californians fail at polls in attempt to legalize recreational marijuana smoking

BY ANNA KANODE  
News Editor

Proposition 19 is a law for which California voters cast a ballot on November 2, 2010. It is another attempt by certain organizations and politicians to make marijuana legal in the state of California, but not federally.

Marijuana has been a hot topic in California for a long time as that region of the United States is ideal for growing the plant. According to the Mother Jones website, if Proposition 19 is passed, it will be legal for people at least 21 years of age to grow, buy, and distribute marijuana. Additionally, it would permit the local governments in California to tax and regulate the commercial sale of the plant.

NORML, or the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, is the main political group behind Proposition 19, and this is not the first time that they have attempted to pass the proposition or succeed at passing other laws. According to the NORML website, the organization was originally founded as Amorphia. The organization coordinated the 1972 California Marijuana Initiative, or Proposition 19, under which adults would be able to use,

possess, and/or cultivate marijuana. The proposition did not pass at that time, although it did receive 33% of the vote.

In 1975, NORML managed to pass the Moscone Act of 1975 by lobbying the state legislature. This act made possessing marijuana a misdemeanor instead of a felony, which meant that in California, if a person were found with an ounce or less of marijuana, the worst that could happen to him would be a \$100 fine. NORML has also influenced the CAMP (Campaign Against Marijuana Planting) helicopters to maintain a 500-foot distance from the ground while they are flying over an area searching for marijuana plants.

On July 1, 1999, California NORML was able to kill Governor Wilson's "Smoke a Joint, Lose Your License" law, which forced a six-month driver's license suspension on persons caught in possession of pot. NORML was one of the original sponsors of the Compassionate Use Act of 1996. This act was the first law that made marijuana use for medical reasons legal in the United States. Since the act was passed, NORML has been fighting against federal intrusions to uphold it.

NORML wishes to make marijuana legal mainly for

medicinal reasons, and they have listed several of their other specific goals on the NORML website. One goal is to provide safe and affordable distribution of medicinal marijuana. Another is to stop unwarranted urine tests for marijuana use. A third goal listed is to legalize the distribution of marijuana to adults.

Dale Gieringer, the director of NORML, was discouraged by recent polls of California voters in which they determined whether or not they were likely to vote in favor of Proposition 19.

"I have never thought it was likely to pass, and it's going exactly like I expected," said Gieringer on the Mother Jones website. "You've got an idea which a majority of people support as a general concept, but when you get down to the specifics, there's a lot of objections that arise."

Chris Lehane, a former high-ranking aide to President Bill Clinton, shared a more positive view on the possible outcome of the vote in a memo to the "Yes on 19" campaign.

"With Election Day just days away, Proposition 19 is looking history in the eye and not blinking," said Lehane on the "Mother Jones" website. "Proposition 19 is in a better position to win on Election Day

than indicated in the mainstream media narrative."

Lehane's belief in Proposition 19's success stems from his assumption of the success of several campaigning tactics that include a television commercial in which young, pro-pot voters talk about Proposition 19 with their peers; some of them who use pot are afraid to admit it or vote in favor of a law supporting it in fear of being busted. However, if Lehane had seen The Field Poll results for Proposition 19, he would have been even more discouraged.

Four months ago, in July, The Field Poll (TFP) showed that 48% of California voters were not going to vote in favor of Proposition 19, and 44% did. Later, around mid-September, TFP revealed a change in public opinion, as only 42% of voters were opposed to the legalization of marijuana, and another 49% planned to approve the law. Then in October, the results flipped again with 49% of voters disclosing their plans to vote unfavorably, and 42% to support the proposition.

Politically, projected votes were divided as to how they would be expected to vote. According to the survey, 51% of Democrats, 57% of non-partisans, and 25% of Republicans intended to vote "yes" for

Proposition 19. Cultural differences, gender, age, and location also affected how many votes the proposition received. According to The Field Poll, African Americans were more likely to vote positively for the legalization of marijuana than other races; men were more likely than women, younger people were more likely than the elderly, and those who lived along the coast were more likely than those who lived more inland. This survey involved 1,501 registered voters, 1,092 of whom had already voted or were likely to vote October 14-26.

California voters did defeat Proposition 19 in the ballots on November 2, 2010. According to the "San Jose Mercury," as of the morning of November 3, nearly 52% of the votes were opposed. Supporters of the bill believed its failure was because the high level of conservatism in old voters and the low turnout of young voters who would have been more likely to vote favorably for the bill. Even so, according to Richard Lee, the bill's chief proponent, the polls did reveal a growing public acceptance of recreational marijuana use. Perhaps the legalization of recreational pot is in the not-too-distant future.

# Drug cartels wreak havoc in Mexico

BY VINNIE IRRIG  
Reporter

Since President Felipe Calderon was elected into office in December of 2006, the Mexican Drug War became an active problem. Before Calderon's presidency, the Mexican government held a passive stance on the drug-related violence occurring. Once Calderon was elected, he started the fight against drug cartels in Mexico almost immediately.

On December 11, 2006, only ten days after he was elected, Calderon sent 6,500 troops to Michoacán to end drug-related violence and drug trafficking. In 2006 alone, over 500 people died due to drug-related crimes in Michoacán.

"It is perverse to me the way they are trying to scare people," said Baja California's prosecutor Rommel Moreno on a Mexican radio station on October 26th, according to the "Los Angeles Times" article "Thirteen Executed at Tijuana Drug Treatment Center."

Violence in Mexico has escalated to the thousands as rival drug cartels are competing with each other for territory and

trafficking routes, but the cartels are also fighting against deployed government forces. These cartels are constantly committing violent acts, such as kidnappings and shootings, as well as attacking social buildings for varied reasons.

Their intentions are to intimidate people so they will not interfere with their business, but motives for others remain unknown. There have been 28,228 drug war-related deaths from January of 2007 to October of 2010, according to the University of San Diego Trans-Border Institute analysis from the "Agencia Reforma" newspaper on October 30. Eleven Mexican mayors have been killed in 2010 alone, and most recently was the death of Gustavo Sanchez, mayor of the town Tancitaro, who was beaten to death with rocks.

"We've had executions of people, a town official, a councilman, but always shot to death ... never anything like this," said Michoacan state prosecutor Jesus Montejano.

On October 21, 2010, the Mexican government seized 134 tons of marijuana after a shootout with drug traffick-

ers in Tijuana. Government officials believe that the marijuana belonged to the infamous Sinaloa Cartel and cost nearly \$200 million. John Burnett, Maria Penalzoza and Robert Benincasa, authors of an NPR article entitled "Mexico Seems to Favor Sinaloa Cartel in Drug War," on May 19, claim that the Sinaloa Cartel is "the largest, richest and oldest in Mexico."

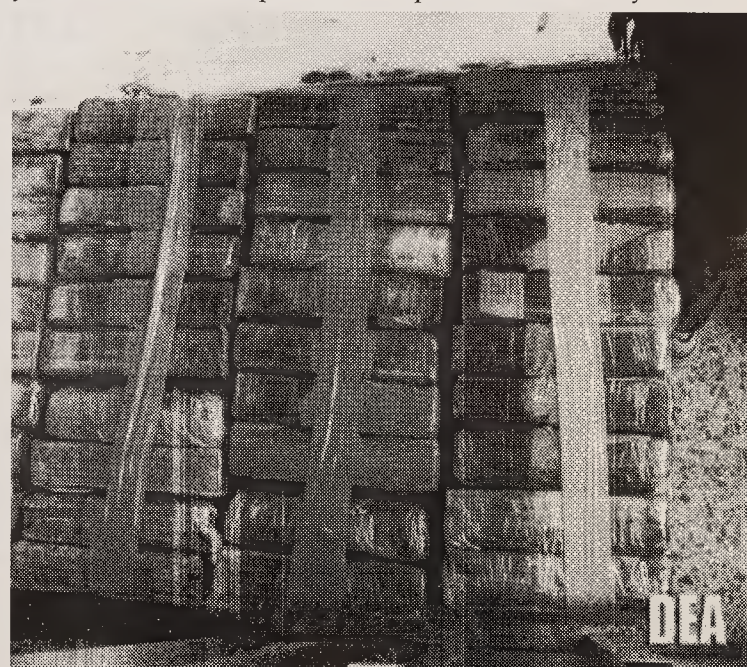
According to the "Los Angeles Times," Calderon has deployed about 45,000 troops and 5,000 federal police to 18 states, where trafficking groups are fighting local authorities and battling for access to the U.S. market.

High demand for illegal drugs in the United States and the financial gain available are reasons why this drug war continues. Drug cartels are defying the Mexican government for the opportunity to traffic drugs into the U.S. From the early 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the majority of cocaine in the U.S. was imported from Colombia, but now an estimated 90 percent of all cocaine arrives through Mexico, according

to the Council of Foreign Relations article "Mexico's Drug War" published on November 20, 2008.

"Mexico basically has two options; one of them is to tolerate the phenomenon, like in the past, with some cost because you have a lot of corruption and

the problem grows and grows. The other option is to combat it frontally with some costs, basically high levels of violence," said University of Miami professor Jorge Chabat in the "Los Angeles Times" feature called "Mexico Under Siege," which is updated almost daily.



Drug wars continue to plague Mexico and the U.S. border regardless of the Mexican government's defensive measures. Drug Enforcement Agency officials seized large quantities of illegal substances obtained through a drug sting in Mexico. *Internet graphic*