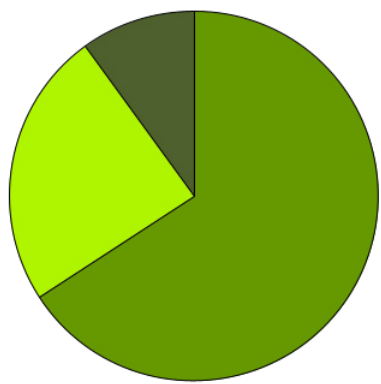


What's Your Opinion?

We asked our readers if they thought marijuana should be legal.

Out of 120 responses:
Yes, for all use – 79
Yes, only for medical – 29
No, not at all – 12



● Yes, for all use ● Yes, but only medical ● No, not at all

Next Poll:

Dead Day(s)?

Do you think Study Day (also known as Dead Day) should last longer than a day?



Scan the QR code above to see previous poll results.

Students can answer polls on Mondays by visiting The Herald's Instagram page, @astateherald.

These and future articles can be found on the Opinion section of The Herald's website. All comics and memes can be found in the Comics section.

Marijuana Should Be Legal At This Point

JACK BOND
STAFF WRITER



Jack Bond is a junior English major from Marion.

Marijuana began to be widely used in the U.S. at the beginning of the 20th century and was outlawed in 1970 by the controlled substances act. Ever since the start of the war on drugs, marijuana has been seen by the public eye as a tool of the devil. While it certainly has adverse health effects that should be warned against, the logic behind the prohibition of this drug does not hold up.

One of the main arguments for the legalization of marijuana is that alcohol and tobacco are just as, if not more dangerous than marijuana, and they are not nearly as severe as tobacco or alcohol. You can easily kill yourself by overdoing it with tobacco or alcohol; however, an overdose of marijuana does not directly lead to death. In fact, it has been discovered that the lethal amount of marijuana is impossible for a human being to consume. It can still be incredibly dangerous to overdo it, but significantly less so than with the legal drugs.

Furthering this, marijuana actually has some benefits that tobacco and alcohol do not. One thing you hear all the time is that marijuana helps with anxiety. Recent studies have shown



Art by Think Vu | Content Creator

this to be true. In a 2016 study of 1429 medical marijuana users, 58.1% reported using it to relieve anxiety with all of them generally agreeing that it did reduce symptoms. It can even be used to reduce nausea and vomiting in chemotherapy patients.

"It's high time to let the people get some high time."

Medical purposes are not where the law should stop though. Recreational marijuana should be the end goal, and the main reason for doing so to reduce crime. Since the drug is illegal, the lengths that people have to go to to get it can be incredibly dangerous. And since the underground world has no legal regulations, violence is used to protect illegal businesses, leading to turf wars and shootouts. Nobody should have to risk getting shot for something that can take the ease off a stressful day of work. Simply instituting dispensaries reduces the need for any of this by a lot. A 2021 study by Appalachian State University found that counties where medical marijuana laws were implemented reduced annual violent crime by 29 cases and those that share a border with Mexico by 61 cases. The study also saw property crimes reduced by 180 cases.

And before you say anything, yes, marijuana is overall bad for you. In terms of health, the risks outweigh the benefits. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have a whole list of reasons not to do it on their website. The most convincing (to me at least) is that long term marijuana usage is associated with a greater risk for developing schizophrenia. According to the CDC, it can also cause cancer and heart disease, and it can even hurt brain development in people 18 or under.

I am not by any means recommending that people try marijuana or even stating that it is an overall good thing to try or that society would be better off if everyone just had some pot on standby. I am saying that the legalization of it would alleviate a lot of problems that keeping it locked by the law causes. With the demand to legalize it growing in recent years, it's high time to let the people get some high time.

Decriminalize, Not Legalize

CAMERON BANDY
SPECIAL TO THE HERALD



Cameron Bandy is a senior political science major from Jonesboro.

Admittedly, I've been changing my opinion about this for some time. In the past, I was critical of both medical and recreational marijuana because of their increasing potency which is of concern for many people. But more people are turning to marijuana, especially older people, to help treat their personal illnesses. In Arkansas, we currently have marijuana for medical purposes but not for recreational use. Since this bill wouldn't make it past the state legislature, a ballot initiative is being conducted to try to put recreational marijuana legalization on the November ballot. I ultimately think the initiative would be struck down and wouldn't pass the overwhelming majority of conservatives registered in Arkansas.

If the bill were to be on the ballot in November, then I would vote against the measure. I am in favor of decriminalizing it but not legalizing it. I don't believe that someone caught with small amounts of marijuana should serve two to five years in federal prison as it does cost money per incarcerated person in the judicial system. The only exception to that should be if the amount of marijuana exceeds 100 pounds. This would also reduce overcrowding in federal prisons which is exhausting the judicial system as crime rates have been increasing in the past few years.

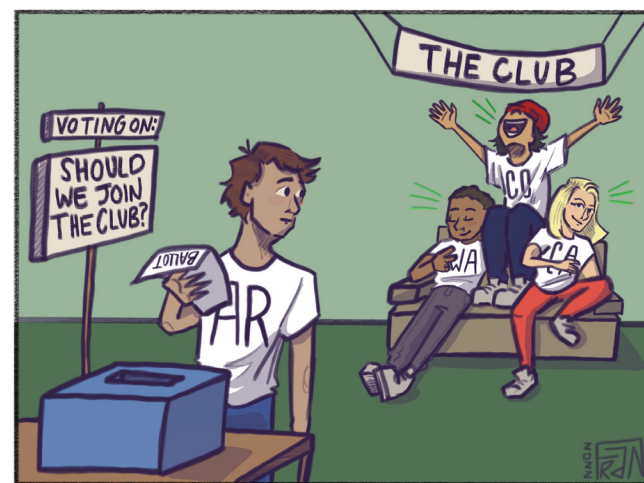
On a more general standpoint, at least politically, I think it is more productive for individual state legislatures to act on issues like marijuana as this is an issue that divides people by

political geography. For example, more liberal states such as California, Oregon, Colorado, Washington and New York are more likely to adopt recreational marijuana usage than more conservative states like Arkansas, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Alabama. State government should handle these types of issues because the federal government should be tackling larger issues such as the rising inflation, the Ukraine war, coronavirus and the supply chain crisis.

"Arkansas should continue to use marijuana for medical purposes only."

Although legalizing marijuana would create jobs and increase revenue in the state of Arkansas, I would be concerned about the revenue structure. In this ballot initiative, a measly 5% of the revenue would go to drug court programs and a supermajority of the revenue would go to the state's general fund. It would be better if the money was spent on public programs to support more Arkansans instead of sitting in the general fund. Arkansas has continued to have a surplus of funding, which is great, but this seems like we're aiding the state government more than Arkansans with the revenue structure as it is.

Allowing people to vote on this issue may be the best route because a recreational marijuana bill in the state legislature would gain no traction. I think the initiative should reach the ballot so Arkansans can make a decision and have their voices heard. I would prefer not to have recreational marijuana but if it did pass then it could have some benefits to creating jobs and increasing revenue for the state. Arkansas should continue to use marijuana for medical purposes only.



Art by Fran Bollinger | Content Creator

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STATEMENT OF PUBLICATION

The Herald is printed every Wednesday during the semester, except during finals and holidays. Copies of The Herald are free.

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