



## November Newsletter

### Drug Decriminalization in Oregon, One Year Later

November 3 marked one year since the passage of Measure 110 – the groundbreaking ballot initiative that made Oregon the first state to decriminalize the possession of all drugs. The campaign was spearheaded by Drug Policy Action, DPA's political advocacy arm, and passed overwhelmingly by Oregon voters.

The measure also greatly increases access to supportive health and harm reduction services. Over the last year, DPA's key implementation partner in the state – the Health Justice Recovery Alliance – worked to secure \$302 million in funding for health services over the next two years, including \$30 million lawmakers agreed to release ahead of schedule last May.

With the removal of criminal penalties for drug possession, thousands of Oregonians are avoiding the devastating life-long consequences of a drug arrest – including the loss of employment, educational opportunities, housing, public benefits, child custody, and immigration status.

The Oregon Criminal Justice Commission estimates that we will see a 95% reduction in racial disparities in drug arrests in the state. This is of critical importance as communities of color in Oregon, like in the rest of the country, have disproportionately borne the brunt of the drug war.

Support for drug decriminalization is at an all-time high, with a [recent poll by DPA and the ACLU](#) finding that 66% of Americans now support eliminating criminal penalties for drug possession and replacing them with a new approach centered in public health.

Since Measure 110's passage, several states – including Washington, Massachusetts, Vermont, Maine, New York, Rhode Island, Maryland, and Kansas – as well as the District of Columbia and the United States Congress have introduced bills or launched campaigns to likewise remove criminal penalties for drug possession.

[Learn more about Measure 110's impact](#)

## DPA and HIPS Launch Decriminalization Campaign in Washington, D.C.

Last month, DPA launched a major campaign – [#DecrimPovertyDC](#) – in partnership with [sex worker and drug user advocates HIPS](#) and 40 other local organizations, to pass legislation to decriminalize drug possession and increase access to harm reduction and health services.

The campaign's [legislative proposal](#), which is expected to be introduced in the D.C. Council in the coming months, ends criminalization for all personal drug possession and provides for expungement and resentencing of past possession arrests and convictions. It also creates a 24-hour harm reduction center where people can access support and safely consume drugs under the supervision of a trained professional or peer who can respond to overdoses.

“We have 50 years of experience to show us what an enforcement-first approach to drugs gets us – record overdose deaths, skyrocketing mass incarceration, and severe racial inequality. To continue down this path is not only irresponsible, but cruel and inhumane,” said [Queen Adesuyi](#), senior manager of national policy in DPA's Office of National Affairs. “This framework gives the District an opportunity to reimagine what it looks like to provide people the support they need, rather than punishing them for being economically disadvantaged. The drug war has already ruined far too many lives – it's time we just say ‘NO MORE’.”

[New polling data shows](#) that 83 percent of D.C. voters, including a majority of voters across all major demographic groups, support removing criminal penalties for possession of small amounts of drugs and investing in health services. While each component of the proposal had widespread support, increasing funding for services and 24-hour harm reduction centers was almost universally favored by polling participants, with 95 percent and 93 percent support respectively.

In addition to calling on legislators to pass the decriminalization legislation, the campaign is mobilizing D.C. residents to build a broad base of support for social and economic justice for the District's predominantly Black and under-resourced residents who have disproportionately borne the brunt of the drug war's harm for decades.

[Learn more.](#)

## DPA Clips, Podcasts, and Stories

### FEATURED POST: DPA Honors Hispanic Heritage Month



drugpolicyalliance · Following

drugpolicyalliance "The other night I had the most horrific nightmare that my children had been taken from me. The reality is that my daughter was. She was adopted without my consent because 'child welfare' convinced my brother and his wife that because I was using drugs at the time that I wouldn't get better and would amount to nothing. I asked my brother to help care for my daughter temporarily. I was on probation for a drug case from five years prior and tested positive during the probation period. I tried to stop using and to get help, but I often felt more judged than helped. I told one doctor that I had been on methadone to help me quit using illicit drugs. He stormed out the room after telling me 'You might as well have stayed on heroin, you're causing the exact same harm to your child!' The truth is that it feels like nobody cares about you when you use drugs. They give up on and judge you even when you ask for help or try to make a change.

"The trauma the system causes parents and children is horrifying. I sought help with my chaotic drug use, but instead my daughter was taken away. My daughter found me when she was a young adult. She recently told me, 'I don't blame you. You did the best you could with what you have. I love you.' And her three brothers, who I raised, adore her. I have a great relationship with all my children. My oldest son is a sergeant in the Army. I process the past with my children and encourage them to seek outside therapy. I know they may have some resentment towards me and I want them to be OK expressing that. Today, I speak all over the country to give a voice to parents who use drugs and help break away at the stigma." - Dinah Ortiz

For #HispanicHeritageMonth. Drug Policy Alliance is honoring Latinx people making important contributions to drug policy and helping to make a difference in the lives of people who use drugs. Today, we're proud to honor Dinah Ortiz to close out the month.

OCTOBER 16

Add a comment... Post

For #HispanicHeritageMonth, DPA honored activist Dinah Ortiz (above), as part of [our Instagram series](#) celebrating Latinx people making important contributions to drug policy and helping to make a difference in the lives of people who use drugs.

[Follow DPA on Instagram.](#)

## DPA Webinar Explores How the Drug War Obstructs Employment

In late October, DPA cohosted a webinar – “Employment, the Drug War, and Economic Disaster” – with the Center for Employment Opportunities, exploring how decades of drug war propaganda has branded all people who use drugs and those even suspected of using drugs as undeserving of employment.

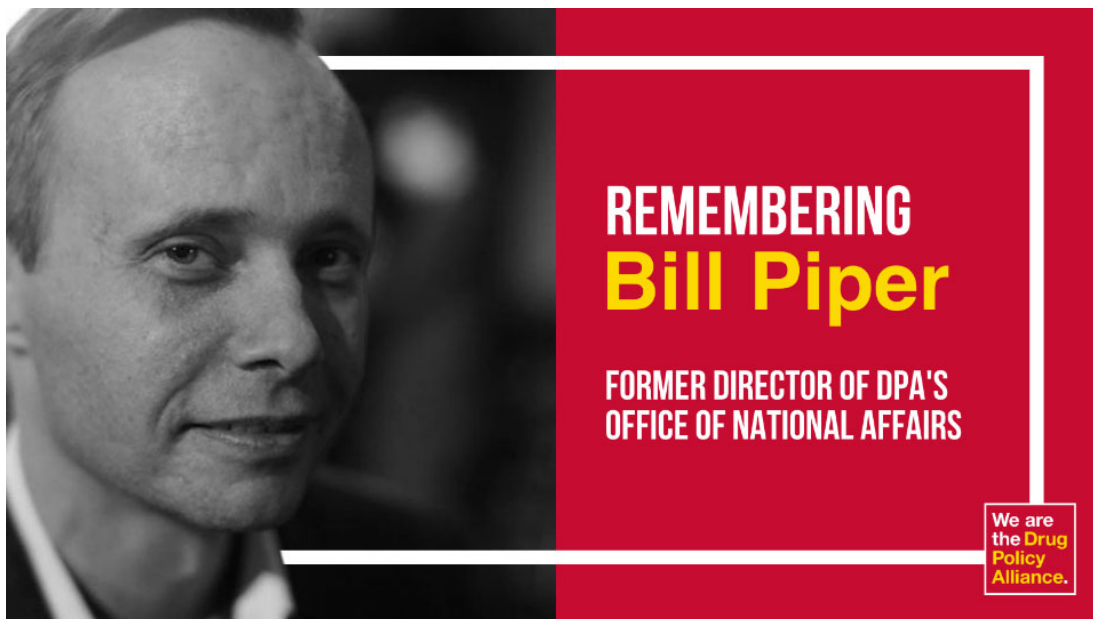
The webinar involved detailed insight from directly impacted people, advocates, and researchers -- moderator Roberta "Toni" Meyers Douglas (Legal Action Center), and panelists Maria "Alex" Alexander (Center for Living and Learning), Ashleigh Dennis (Roots and Rebound), Jasmin Reggler (Rochester Resident), and Genevieve Rimer (Center for Employment Opportunities).

This was the last in our Uprooting the Drug War webinar series, [six online discussions](#) that investigated how to fully extract the drug war and its culture of criminalization and punishment from our lives. [Watch recordings from previous sessions of the discussion sessions on our YouTube channel.](#)

DPA's Uprooting the Drug War project also includes [a series of reports and an interactive website](#). These are designed to engage activists across sectors in understanding and dismantling the ways in which the war on drugs has infiltrated and shaped six key systems: education, employment, housing, child welfare, immigration, and public benefits.

[\*\*Learn more about Uprooting the Drug War.\*\*](#)

## **In Memoriam: Bill Piper**



DPA mourns the loss of our friend and former colleague, Bill Piper, who passed away on October 27.

Bill worked at DPA for two decades as the head of our Office of National Affairs, building the foundation of our federal strategy, and lobbying Congress to end the war on drugs. He had an incredible impact over the years, playing a pivotal role in reforming draconian sentencing laws, ending federal interference in state marijuana policies, and passing legislation to prevent overdose deaths and other drug-related harms. Bill helped move drug policy reform from the fringe of national politics toward the mainstream.

Piper, as most of us called him, dedicated his life's work to the rights, liberty, and dignity of people who use drugs, and those most targeted by the drug war. We will always be inspired by his wisdom and commitment.

## Drug Policy in the News

**Marijuana Moment:** Oregon's Drug Decriminalization Initiative Has Created \$300 Million In Funding For Treatment And Services

**TruthOut:** Biden Promised to Decriminalize Marijuana. He Shouldn't Wait for Congress.

**Reason:** Ethan Nadelmann: How To End the Drug War (and What Comes Next)

**NPR:** Overdose Deaths Are So High that The Biden Team is Embracing Ideas

Once Seen as Taboo

**Business Insider:** Senate Democrats Want to Legalize Cannabis. Meet 18 Lobbyists Pushing for It to Become A Reality.

**Filter:** Baltimore Study Boosts Movements to Decriminalize Drugs and Sex Work

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