



January Newsletter

5 of DPA's Big Accomplishments from 2021

In 1971, President Nixon launched the war on drugs, declaring that the United States would “wage a new, all-out offensive” on “drug abuse.” Fifty years later, in 2021, DPA had one of our most successful years in our efforts to dismantle the drug war and build effective and compassionate alternatives in its place.

Here are five of our most impactful successes over the last year:

1. We Legalized Marijuana in New York and New Mexico

Last spring, New York and New Mexico legalized marijuana with policy models that begin repairing the harms of prohibition. These momentous victories were the result of multi-year advocacy campaigns led by DPA and our partners.

In New York, the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act set a new gold standard for regulation, with strong provisions for record expungement, community reinvestment, social equity, and racial and economic justice. Our legislation is already having a major impact on people's lives. In New York City, there were only eight marijuana arrests within three months of the law's passage. This is a seismic shift – a decade ago, New York City was the marijuana arrest capital of the country, with more than 51,000 such arrests in 2011 alone. [Learn More.](#)

In New Mexico, the Cannabis Regulation Act (and amendments to the Expungement of Criminal Records Act) legalized the sale and cultivation of marijuana. The new legislation also promotes diversity and equity in the new industry, and provides vital expungement and resentencing provisions for people with past marijuana arrests or convictions. [Learn More.](#)

New Jersey also legalized marijuana, with legislation that will allow expungement of marijuana possession records and allocate substantial sales tax revenue to areas most harmed by the drug war. This followed a successful ballot question in 2020 where voters overwhelmingly demonstrated their support for legalization. DPA had

worked towards this victory, alongside partners in the state, for nearly two decades.

[Learn More.](#)

2. We Launched a Campaign to Decriminalize All Drugs in Washington, D.C.

In Washington, D.C., we launched a campaign – #DecrimPovertyDC – in partnership with [HIPS](#), one of the city's leading harm reduction service providers, to enact legislation in 2022 that will decriminalize drugs and increase access to harm reduction services in the nation's capital. The campaign aims to decriminalize the possession of all drugs, provide for expungement and resentencing of past drug possession arrests and convictions, and create a 24-hour harm reduction center where people who use drugs can access the support services they need. [Learn More.](#)

This marks a continuation of our state and local decriminalization efforts, following our successful passage of a groundbreaking ballot initiative in 2020 that made Oregon the first U.S. state to decriminalize drug possession and increase access to health and harm reduction services. In 2021, we secured more than \$300 million in funding for these services over the next two years. [Learn More.](#)

3. We Advanced Federal Legislation to Decriminalize All Drugs and End Marijuana Prohibition

With the support of Reps. Cori Bush and Bonnie Watson Coleman, we introduced the Drug Policy Reform Act in Congress. This bill would federally decriminalize drug possession and invest in crucial health services. It is a major opportunity to begin turning the page on the punitive drug war and start a new chapter focused on respect and dignity. [Learn More.](#)

We have also been leading the fight to pass the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment & Expungement (MORE) Act, our signature bill that would effectively end federal marijuana prohibition and repair its harms. If passed, it would deschedule marijuana as a controlled substance, expunge marijuana convictions, reduce marijuana sentences, and ensure that people are no longer banned from receiving federal benefits due to marijuana activity. It would reduce time served by an estimated 73,000 person-years by 2030 among existing and future incarcerated people. In September, the MORE Act cleared a major hurdle when it was passed by the House Judiciary Committee. [Learn More.](#)

4. We Opened the Country's First Legal Overdose Prevention Center

In a victory over a decade in the making, New York City became the first place in the United States to open legally-sanctioned overdose prevention centers (OPCs), also known as supervised consumption sites. This followed years of advocacy by DPA, [VOCAL-NY](#), and other harm reductionists with radical visions. The timing of this initiative is critical as, during the first year of the pandemic, [fatal overdoses in New York City increased by over 38%](#) – with more than 2,300 overdose deaths across the five boroughs.

The two OPCs – the [Washington Heights Corner Project](#) and [New York Harm Reduction Educators](#) – are now operating in Manhattan, and have formed a new organization – OnPoint NYC – to run the sites. In the first three weeks of the OPCs operating, the sites were accessed more than 2,000 times, and at least 63 overdoses were prevented. [Learn More.](#)

5. We Secured Dedicated Federal Funding for Syringe Programs

Following months of determined advocacy, we secured \$30 million in first-ever dedicated federal funding for syringe services programs and other harm reduction providers. Our campaigning also led to the House Appropriations Committee passing a spending bill that allocates almost \$70 million for expanded access to syringe services programs. These programs are an essential component of an evidence-based drug policy, as they can teach people how to prevent and respond to a drug overdose, and they reduce the risk of people contracting HIV or hepatitis C from sharing or reusing syringes. [Learn More.](#)

DPA would not have had such a successful year without your support. We know that true justice for all will take a powerful, diverse coalition of activists, advocates, and people who believe that it is possible. We need people like you. Thank you for standing with us.

If you would like to support our work in 2022, please [become a member of DPA](#), or [donate via our website](#).

Two Years in Two Minutes

It hasn't just been one year of accomplishments – we've had two years of incredible drug policy wins. The challenge is: can we share two years of our highlights in just two minutes?

To find out, watch this video with our executive director, **Kassandra Frederique**, deputy director of our Department of Research and Academic Engagement, **Sheila Vakharia**, and our board chair, **Derek Hodel**.



Watch the video here.

DPA Clips, Podcasts, and Stories

DPA IS NOW ON TIKTOK!



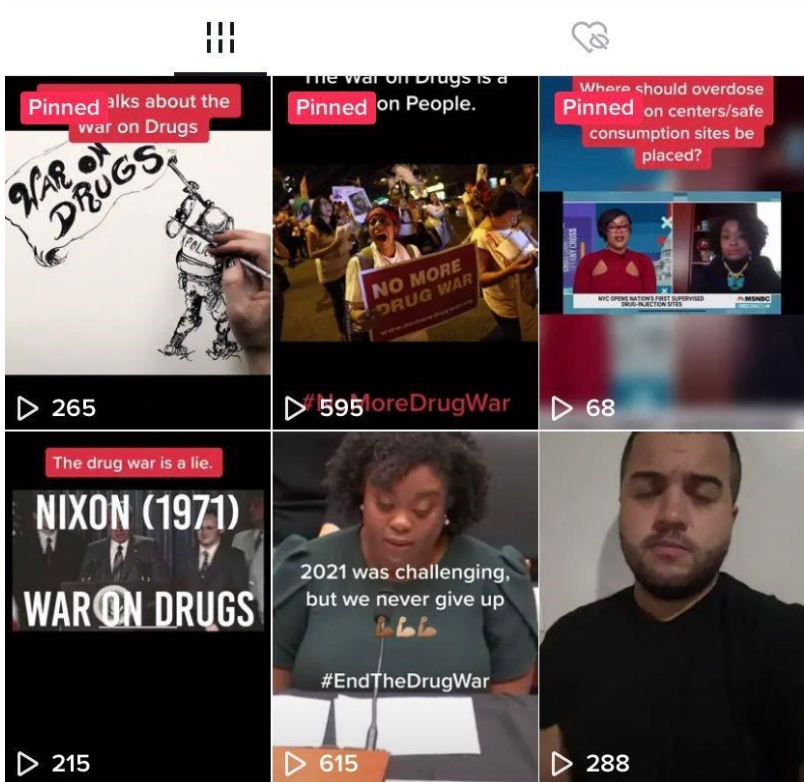
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In Memoriam: Phil Harvey

DPA mourns the passing of Phil Harvey, who died on December 2 at the age of 83. Phil was one of DPA's most generous and longstanding donors. We

honor his commitment to ending the war on drugs, and his lifelong dedication to criminal legal reform, human rights, civil liberties, and reproductive choice.

Phil was the founder of the DKT Liberty Project, a non-profit organization founded to promote individual liberty. He also authored five books including *The Government vs. Erotica: The Siege of Adam & Eve*, which was nominated by the American Library Association's Freedom Roundtable as 2001's leading work on intellectual freedom.

DKT's program director, AC Bushnell, said, "Phil was absolutely unique and incredibly smart. He was devoted to promoting the rights of individuals to live their lives in freedom. He was a fighter and supported dozens of individuals and organizations as they struggled against government overreach."

[Learn more.](#)

Drug Policy in the News

Business Insider: New York City Will Install 10 Vending Machines That Dispense Naloxone and Clean Needles

The New Republic: There's a Revolution Happening in Harm Reduction for Drug Users. Can Our Broken Health Care System Handle It?

Marijuana Moment: Here Are the Biggest Marijuana, Psychedelics and Drug Policy News Stories Of 2021

NBC LX: After Decriminalizing Drugs, Oregon Plans to Spend \$270M on Treatment

The Guardian: 'We're Making Harm Reduction Cool': Overdose Reversal Narcan Becomes A Rave Essential

New York Times: Malta Becomes First E.U. Country to Legalize Marijuana

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