



December Newsletter

In Historic Vote, U.S. House Passes Far-Reaching Marijuana Reform

Yesterday, in a historic vote, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the [Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment & Expungement \(MORE\) Act](#) by 228 to 164 votes, making it the first piece of comprehensive marijuana reform legislation that actually deschedules marijuana – and the only one centered in reparative justice – to pass either chamber of Congress.

"The criminalization of marijuana is a cornerstone of the racist war on drugs. Even after a decade of reform victories, one person was arrested nearly every minute last year for simply possessing marijuana," said [Maritza Perez](#), Director of the Office of National Affairs. "The House took the most powerful step forward to address that shameful legacy. But the MORE Act as passed is imperfect, and we will continue to demand more until our communities have the world they deserve."

As the MORE Act moved through the political process, language impacting people with criminal legal system involvement was added to the final version of the bill. Those provisions disallow people with marijuana convictions from potentially fully participating in the industry at the federal level. Language was also added intentionally limiting resentencing and expungement relief to "nonviolent" marijuana offenses. DPA is committed to working with next year's Congress to remove these additions and pass a bill that fully aligns with our principles.

"Getting to this point definitely gives us hope, but the fight is far from over. We will continue to build support for an even stronger, and more inclusive bill in the next session," said [Queen Adesuyi](#), Policy Manager for the Office of National Affairs. "We are grateful that members of Congress have rightly come to the realization that the drug war has exacerbated the racial injustices in this country and ending marijuana prohibition is a concrete tangible action they can take to benefit our communities now."

DPA has worked tirelessly to move the MORE Act forward since its inception, by

working with House Judiciary Chairman Jerry Nadler and Senator Kamala Harris to draft and introduce the legislation, creating the Marijuana Justice Coalition to build widespread support, and pushing for a Judiciary Committee mark-up amid a busy impeachment trial.

[Learn more](#)

DPA Outlines Priorities for the Biden-Harris Administration's First 100 Days

Joe Biden and Kamala Harris will take office at a moment when the U.S. overdose crisis has already claimed more than 70,000 lives in a single year. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to endanger the lives of people already at increased risk, particularly people who are incarcerated and people who use drugs, it is critical that the next administration works hand-in-hand with Congress and uses its executive powers to save lives and provide relief.

DPA has published [a list of priorities](#) that we are urging the Biden-Harris administration to prioritize, particularly during its first 100 days in office. This includes:

- Passing legislation to reduce jail and prison populations in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Replacing punitive fentanyl policies with legislation that advances a public health approach.
- Directing the Department of Justice to withdraw from litigation challenging the operation of overdose prevention centers (OPCs), also known as supervised consumption sites (SCS).
- Instructing the Food and Drug Administration to exempt naloxone from applicable prescription requirements, making it available as an over the counter drug.

[Read the full list of priorities here.](#)

DPA Mourns the Passing of Board Member, David C. Lewis

DPA mourns the passing of our long-serving board member, [David C. Lewis](#), who was a foundational leader in our movement and for our organization.



David was a professor of Medicine and Community Health and the Donald G. Millar Distinguished Professor of Alcohol and Addiction Studies at Brown University, where in 1982, he founded the Center for Alcohol and Addiction studies, which he directed until 2000.

David was a board member of the Drug Policy Foundation, where he helped to shepherd its merger with the Lindesmith Center, which resulted in the formation of the Drug Policy Alliance in 2000. He had served on our board ever since.

In David's long career, he also sat on many other boards that straddled the spectrum of drug policy responses, including the American Society of Addiction Medicine and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, where he was vice chairman, and the Association for Medical Education and Research in Substance Abuse. He was the author of over 400 publications, and was the founding editor of DATA – the Brown University Digest of Addiction Theory and Application.

David was a recipient of the AMA's Education and Research Foundation Award in recognition of "outstanding contributions and leadership in championing the inclusion of alcohol and other drug problems into the mainstream of medical practice and medical education." He also received the W.W. Keen Medical Alumni Service Award from the Brown Medical School Alumni Association for "the physician leader and educator whose contributions represent the best of both clinical and academic medicine."

David passed away peacefully on December 2.

DPA Clips, Podcasts, and Stories

FEATURED POST: WORLD AIDS DAY



Drug Policy Alliance @DrugPolicyOrg



On this #WorldAIDSDay, we remember the harm reduction warriors who came before us and we fight for them today and every day. These are the policies we need to reduce the spread of HIV among people who inject drugs, A THREAD 📌

2:57 PM · Dec 1, 2020 · Twitter Web App

28 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 36 Likes



Drug Policy Alliance @DrugPolicyOrg · 2h
Replying to @DrugPolicyOrg



1/ Drug paraphernalia laws make it hard to get sterile syringes & drug equipment so people are forced to share and reuse them. We have fought these laws in states across the country and made significant gains, but there is still work to do. drugpolicy.org/issues/syringe... #WorldAIDSDay



Syringe Access

Injection drug use is associated with a high risk of infection by blood-borne diseases such as HIV, but sterile syringe access programs help ...

drugpolicy.org

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Read the full tweet thread here.

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Internationally-Recognized Figures Join DPA in Urging Congress to Pass Equitable Marijuana Reform

Dozens of internationally-recognized musicians, actors, artists, athletes, influencers, and advocates joined DPA in calling on congressmembers to support equitable marijuana reform by passing the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act.

Our [public letter](#) – signed by the likes of Kevin Garnett, Ty Dolla \$ign, Matt Barnes, and Baby Bash – points out that reforming our federal marijuana laws is key to reducing the racial disparities that exist within the criminal legal system and providing economic opportunity to those that have been disproportionately harmed by prohibition.

[Read the letter.](#)

Why Voters Are Rejecting the War on Drugs

Wherever the war on drugs was on the ballot this year, the war on drugs lost.

In Oregon, [voters approved Measure 110](#), the nation's first measure to end criminal penalties for the personal possession of drugs – an initiative spearheaded by Drug Policy Action, DPA's advocacy and political arm. Meanwhile in Arizona, Montana, New Jersey, South Dakota, and Mississippi, [voters approved measures to legalize adult use or medical marijuana](#).

DPA's executive director, [Kassandra Frederique](#), joined a distinguished panel at WBUR, Boston's NPR news station, to discuss the drug-related ballot measures that passed on Election Day and the shift in American drug policy.

“Ending the drug war means supporting people who are navigating addiction. Drug Policy Alliance and Action have always supported replacing criminalization with a health-based approach,” Frederique said, noting that Portugal – which decriminalized all drug possession in 2001 – has demonstrated an effective alternative to prohibition.

“Portugal shows that we can do this. We should give people more access to different kinds of options as opposed to trying to funnel them through the criminal legal system.”

[Listen here.](#)

Drug Policy in the News

Filter: My Husband Invented Naloxone, My Son Died of Overdose. Oregon Gives Me Hope.

The Verge: Drug Decriminalization in Oregon Could Be a Step Toward Better Public Health

Politico: Biden's Other Health Crisis: A Resurgent Drug Epidemic

Vice: Vancouver Just Voted to Decriminalize All Drugs

The Hill: Drug Decriminalization Advocate Praises New Oregon Law as 'Huge Knock' on Drug War

Vox: America's War on Drugs Has Failed. Oregon is Showing a Way Out.

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