



April Newsletter

Back to Back Victories: New York and New Mexico Legalize Marijuana

In a historic week, both New York and New Mexico legalized marijuana for adult use and began to repair the harms of prohibition. These momentous wins are the result of multi-year advocacy campaigns led by DPA and our partners.

New York

New York has passed the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA), establishing one of the most ambitious marijuana legalization programs in the nation. Gov. Cuomo signed the MRTA into law on Wednesday morning, just hours after lawmakers in the state Senate and Assembly voted overwhelmingly in favor of the legislation. Effective immediately, there are no penalties for the public possession of up to three ounces of marijuana.

The enforcement of marijuana prohibition has devastated communities across New York state, primarily communities of color and low-income communities. For years, DPA has been on the forefront working to reduce marijuana arrests in the state and legalize marijuana for adult use. Our [Start SMART NY campaign](#) fought tirelessly to end marijuana prohibition in New York and create a new, well-regulated, and inclusive marijuana industry that is rooted in racial and economic justice.

Crucially, the MRTA includes vital protections against housing and employment discrimination and addresses additional harmful impacts of marijuana prohibition in the fields of immigration and child welfare. It establishes a licensing system that favors small businesses and family farmers, not large corporations, including co-op and microbusiness licenses that can reduce barriers to entry for people with less access to capital and traditional avenues of financing. It also uses tax revenue for a robust community reinvestment program, job training, youth programs, and drug treatment programs.

[Melissa Moore](#), DPA's New York State Director, released the following statement:

"A new era for marijuana justice is here. After years of hard work against long odds, New York has enacted one of the most ambitious marijuana legalization programs in the country. Let's be clear – the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act is an outright victory for the communities hit hardest by the failed war on drugs. By placing community reinvestment, social equity, and justice front and center, this law is the new gold standard for reform efforts nationwide. Today we celebrate, tomorrow we work hard to make sure this law is implemented fairly and justly for all New Yorkers."

[*Learn more about this victory in New York*](#)

New Mexico

On Wednesday, New Mexico lawmakers passed the Cannabis Regulation Act and the Expungement of Certain Criminal Records Act, both of which put equity and social justice at the forefront. For decades, racist marijuana enforcement in the state has targeted Hispanic/Latinx, Black, Native, and Indigenous people. DPA has been advocating for years at the state legislature for passage of legislation allowing the possession, use, and sales of marijuana.

The Cannabis Regulation Act will create a system to tax and regulate marijuana responsibly for adults 21 and over and allows personal cultivation of up to six plants. It has robust medical marijuana patient protections and public health and safety provisions, and promotes diversity and equity in the new industry. The Expungement of Certain Criminal Records Act provides vital expungement and resentencing provisions for people with past marijuana arrests or convictions.

"Today's passage of the cannabis legalization and expungement package will ensure equitable opportunities for farmers and other small businesses, and long overdue justice – including automatic expungement – for those with past cannabis arrests or convictions," said [Emily Kaltenbach](#), DPA's Senior Director for Resident States and New Mexico.

"And it doesn't stop there. We still have our work cut out for us to fully repair the damage that has been done as a result of the war on drugs, and that means coming back during the 2022 budget session to ensure funds are made available for critical reinvestment in the communities that have been most harmed."

[*Learn more about this victory in New Mexico*](#)

We need your help to build on this momentum.

These victories in New York and New Mexico make it clear that more and more Americans like you are demanding reform. But there is still so much more to do. One person is still arrested nearly every minute simply for possessing marijuana, saddling people with lifelong burdens that make it harder to get a job, an apartment, student financial aid, or a credit card. That's why we need your support. [Please consider making a donation to the Drug Policy Alliance today.](#) We must stay focused on ending this drug war once and for all. [Donate now.](#)

Donate

Oregon Legislature Approves \$20 Million in Immediate Funding for Health and Harm Reduction Services Outlined in Measure 110

Last November, Oregon voters approved Measure 110 to become the first state in the nation to decriminalize the personal use and possession of all drugs while expanding access to treatment and other health services without raising taxes.

In a dramatic recognition of the urgency of providing treatment, health, and harm reduction services in conjunction with the all-drug decriminalization provisions outlined in Measure 110 that **went into effect February 1**, the state's Joint Ways and Means Committee voted to provide \$20 million in up-front funding.

"We thank the Oregon legislature for recognizing the urgent need to provide people with health and harm reduction services as outlined in Measure 110 and supported by over 58.5% of voters in the state," said **Theshia Naidoo**, DPA's Managing Director of Legal Affairs.

"What we know is that expansion of services goes hand in hand with successful decriminalization policies. We've seen increased access to health services be the key to success in other countries that have implemented some form of decriminalization, such as Portugal and Switzerland, and we know that it will hold true here as well."

Measure 110 was spearheaded by Drug Policy Action, DPA's 501c4 affiliate.

[Learn more.](#)

DPA Clips, Podcasts, and Stories

FEATURED POST: Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer Thanks DPA and Allies for NY Marijuana Legalization



Chuck Schumer ✓
@SenSchumer



Thank you @CPeoplesStokes @LizKrueger @DPA_NY @StartSmartNY @VOCALNewYork @Kassandra_Fred @MooreMeliss and more for your work to legalize marijuana in New York and ensure equity for those most harmed by prohibition.

I will keep working to end the federal marijuana prohibition.

 **DPA NY Policy Office** @DPA_NY · Mar 30

VICTORY: NY has moved marijuana legalization the RIGHT way by passing #MRTA in the Legislature tonight!

This legalizes marijuana for adult use, addresses the harms of overcriminalization, & establishes one of the most ambitious marijuana legalization programs in the nation 🇺🇸

[Show this thread](#)

NEW YORK HAS LEGALIZED IT RIGHT!

 

10:49 PM · Mar 30, 2021 · Twitter Web App

[See the tweet here.](#)

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Reform Conference on Pause

Like most of our allies, the Drug Policy Alliance has been engaged in discussions about how to adapt and shift the way we do our work given the current circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We made one decision recently that we felt was important to share as soon as possible.

[We have decided not to host the 2021 International Drug Policy Reform Conference.](#)

This is a painful decision for us. The Reform Conference is the largest gathering of drug policy reformers from all over the world, and nothing can truly replace the energy created by hosting 1,500+ people all passionate about ending the drug war in one place. We look forward to it and are grateful that reformers choose to come year after year.

Although vaccine availability has given us hope, even if travel resumes in the next few months, large gatherings may still put some of our most vulnerable allies at risk. We did not feel comfortable planning for an event where potentially only some of our community would be able to fully participate.

Instead, we are excited at the possibility to bring people together when the time is right. We intend for our future Reform Conference to provide the same dynamic spaces and opportunities to be inspired, and to connect with and learn from each other. We hope you will join us.

The Reform Conference may be on pause, but our work is not. [We hope you will join the ongoing virtual conversations we've been having and will continue to have throughout these next few months on our recently launched initiative Uprooting the Drug War.](#)

What makes our time together special is not just physical space but the heart and humanity in our conversations. We're committed to keeping that going. We hope to see you there.

**DPA Statement on Derek Chauvin's Defense
Attempting to Use Drugs as Justification for George**

Floyd's Death

In response to the Derek Chauvin's defense opening the George Floyd trial on Monday arguing that drugs were responsible for Floyd's death, **Kassandra Frederique**, DPA's Executive Director, released the following statement:

"It's no secret how George Floyd died. The world witnessed those nine and a half painful minutes as Derek Chauvin held his knee to Floyd's neck. And yet, today, his defense opened the trial arguing that drugs are what killed him. This is unconscionable, but not at all surprising. Drug involvement – whether perceived or real – has long been used as a cover for law enforcement to harass, inflict violence upon and even kill Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people.

We know exactly what killed George Floyd. It's the systems that have been created through the parasitic relationship between policing, the drug war, and racism. These systems empower officers like Derek Chauvin to operate with impunity, snuff out Black life and attempt to avoid any and all accountability.

And while we want to see justice for George Floyd, this trial—regardless of the verdict—will not be enough. So long as the drug war remains, Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people will continue to have a bounty on their heads. They will continue to be gunned down in their beds, like Breonna Taylor, or held down until they can't breathe, like George Floyd, Daniel Prude, and too many others. The deep-seated structural racism and stigma around people who use drugs lead to horrific outcomes across the country. Until we dispense with the notion that people involved with drugs—or even thought to be involved with drugs—are not guaranteed the same right to dignity and life, we will continue to fight."

[Learn more.](#)

DPA Publishes New Resources on Substance Use Disorder Treatment

DPA has published a new series of webpages on [Substance Use Disorder Treatment](#). The series offers a wealth of information on what substance use disorder treatment actually is, as well as on different types of treatment,

including [opioid agonist treatment \(OAT\)](#), sometimes known as medication-assisted treatment, and [contingency management](#). It also explores issues that arise in making treatment accessible, including [involuntary treatment](#) and [treatment in the criminal legal system](#).

Not everyone who uses drugs needs or wants treatment. But if they do, they should have access to treatments based in science, equity, and compassion.

Far too many people who desire treatment face challenges that stop them from accessing the services they need and want. There are numerous obstacles to treatment including: costs that aren't affordable or not covered by insurance; too few providers and long waitlists for existing providers; a one-size-fits-all approach; and a stigma associated with substance use that often makes it difficult for people to seek help.

The more barriers people face, the less likely they are to access services. That's why DPA is committed to ensuring access to effective substance use disorder treatment for those who want it.

[Learn more.](#)

Drug Policy in the News

Rolling Stone: New Mexico Becomes Second State in 24 Hours to Vote to Legalize Weed

New York Times: New York Legalizes Recreational Marijuana, Tying Move to Racial Equity.

Medium: No More Excuses. The Drug War Killed Breonna Taylor.

New York Times: Five Who Used Marijuana in Past Will Exit White House, Calling New Guidelines Into Question

Washington Post: To Truly Create Safe Communities, We Must End the War on Drugs

Marijuana Moment: D.C. Can Take Steps Toward Legalizing Marijuana Sales Amid Congressional Ban, Feds Conclude

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