



## September Newsletter

### Kassandra Frederique is DPA's New Executive Director

The Drug Policy Alliance is delighted to announce that [Kassandra Frederique](#) is the new executive director. Kassandra, an acclaimed drug policy reform activist, assumed the helm at DPA on September 7.

Kassandra began her remarkable journey at DPA over ten years ago, when she joined the organization as an intern. Since then, she has become internationally recognized as a fierce advocate for drug policy reform, and an extraordinary leader. As head of DPA's New York Policy Office, and later as managing director of campaigns and advocacy, she directed the campaign that reduced cannabis arrests in New York City by 84 percent. For the past several years, she has led the fight to legalize cannabis in New York state, with careful attention to equity and justice for communities of color targeted by the war on drugs.



She takes on the role of executive director following interim executive director, [Richard Burns](#), who joined DPA in February after his tenure at Lambda Legal.

“Together, we will continue the fight to ensure that the war on drugs is no longer a pretext for destroying lives and targeting people who are Indigenous, Black, Latinx, LGBTQ+, women, youth, immigrants, and poor,” Kassandra assured. “We will fight to ensure that people will no longer be harassed, arrested, prosecuted, incarcerated, and deported for drug use, possession, or sales, nor be subject to other forms of dehumanization and punishment beyond the criminal legal system, including housing, child services, education, and immigration. I have not only been tasked to fight, but also to envision, articulate, and build the world that our communities deserve – one where people aren’t punished for who they are, what they look like, or what they may or may not put in their bodies.”

“I am grateful for the expertise and leadership that Richard Burns brought to DPA and to me this year,” she added. “He’s been generous with counsel and knowledge, and I know he will remain a friend to me and to DPA.”



Richard joined DPA in February after former executive director, Maria McFarland Sánchez-Moreno, stepped down to join Human Rights Watch. Richard has extensive experience as a long-time executive director and interim CEO in many settings, including at Lambda Legal and the North Star Fund. He was selected by DPA’s board of directors to bring strong and stable leadership until Cassandra ascended to the top role.

“I can think of no better person to take on this role than Cassandra Frederique,” Richard said. “Alongside her passion and integrity, Cassandra has an unrivalled depth of experience in driving change – in drug policy and beyond. She is a leader to watch.”

Richard will become the interim executive director of the Johnson Family Foundation this month.

Kassandra’s leadership was also welcomed by [Derek Hodel](#), president of DPA’s board of directors.

“This week, Cassandra assumed the helm at DPA amidst a national reckoning with racial injustice, and as the COVID-19 pandemic lays bare the structural inequities that ravage communities of color, including the racist war on drugs. With Cassandra, we struck gold – she is the right person at the right time to lead DPA,” Derek asserted. “She understands the power and promise of the drug policy reform movement, and has the integrity and commitment to ensure we fulfill that promise. I am also incredibly grateful for our interim executive director, Richard Burns, who has provided pivotal guidance and support to DPA this year.”

[Read Cassandra's message to the movement](#)

## Historic Bill to Federally Decriminalize Marijuana to be Voted on in House

The House of Representatives' majority leader, Steny Hoyer, has announced that our federal marijuana legalization bill, the Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act, will be brought to a vote on the House floor in late September.

DPA has been deeply involved with the development of the MORE Act, working closely with the bill's sponsors to shape the legislation and build bipartisan support

It is the first-ever comprehensive marijuana legalization bill to be considered for a full House floor vote. The MORE Act would deschedule marijuana and end federal prohibition in a fair way by reinvesting tax revenue back into communities most affected by failed marijuana laws. It would support equitable licensing, allow for expungement of cannabis arrests and convictions, prevent deportation for marijuana offenses, and so much more.

The MORE Act is federal marijuana policy done right, proof that we can ensure the equity and justice long denied to communities of color, while continuing to move legislation forward.

*[Learn more.](#)*

## **DPA Mourns the Passing of Two Titans of Drug Policy**

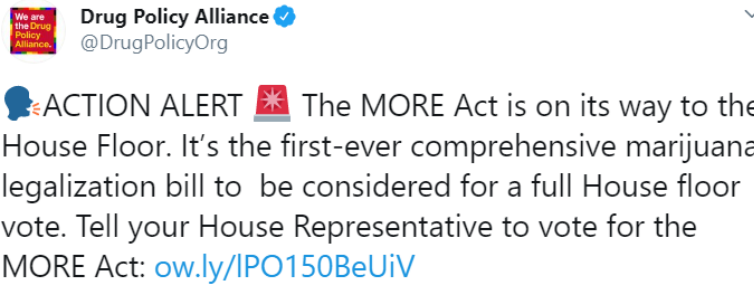
The Drug Policy Alliance mourns the passing of Henry van Ameringen, who died on September 10 at the age of 90. Henry was one of DPA's most beloved, generous, and longstanding donors. We honor his commitment to ending the racist war on drugs, and his lifelong dedication to the liberation and happiness of LGBTQ people. He certainly leaves the world a better place than he found it.

The entire DPA staff and board sends their condolences to his spouse T. Eric Galloway, and to his family, friends, and the movements whose work he touched with his transformative support.

DPA also mourns the recent passing of Professor Kevin Zeese, who co-founded the Drug Policy Foundation with the late Arnold Trebach in 1987. Their organization later merged with the Lindesmith Center to become DPA in 2000. Kevin was a powerful force for justice, in the movement for drug policy reform and beyond, and his contribution to progress has been immeasurable.

## **DPA Clips, Podcasts, and Stories**

## FEATURED POST: Tell Your House Representative to Vote for the MORE Act



**In 2018, over half a million people in the U.S. were arrested for personal possession of marijuana.**

**Any exposure to the criminal legal system can negatively affect mental and physical well-being. Ending criminalization reduces health risks, particularly for targeted communities of color and people struggling with drug misuse.**

Source: <https://ajphaphublications.org/doi/pdf/10.2105/AJPH.2019.305414>

**#WeWantMORE**

MARIJUANA JUSTICE COALITION

2:50 PM · Sep 1, 2020 · Hootsuite Inc.

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## DPA's Podcast, Drugs & Stuff: After Her Son Overdosed and Died, Jessie Dunleavy Realized it Was Preventable

In the latest episode of DPA's podcast, Drugs & Stuff, Jessie Dunleavy discusses how she dealt with the death of her son Paul from an overdose in 2017, and how it took her on a journey from concerned mother to outspoken advocate.

Jessie Dunleavy always knew her son Paul was unique. He struggled throughout his life – to learn, to be accepted – and she tried however she could to help him along the way. But as he got older, and began to struggle with drug use, system after system began to shut them out. Where he needed hope, he got silence; where he needed support, he got punishment. In April 2017, Paul overdosed and died. Devastated by his passing, Jessie

began to learn as much as she could. In the process, she uncovered unknown details of her son's life, glimpsed the depth of the injustices he was subjected to, and realized that his death had been preventable.

Listen now [on our website](#) or on your favorite podcast streaming platforms. The podcast's full back catalog can be found [here](#).

*[Listen to the latest episode here.](#)*

## **Overdose Awareness Day: DPA Celebrates the Unsung Heroes of Overdose Prevention**

DPA joined allies around the world in [marking International Overdose Awareness Day](#) on August 31.

As we face an ongoing overdose crisis, which has worsened during the global COVID-19 pandemic, DPA is taking a moment to honor the people saving lives every day by preventing and reversing overdoses.

We aren't talking about the people traditionally thought of as first responders, like EMTs, nurses, and doctors - though they rightfully deserve praise for stepping up in unprecedented ways to aid in the COVID-19 response.

While undoubtedly heroic, medical professionals are not the only overdose first responders. People who use drugs have one of the most crucial roles in saving lives. In fact, they do more to prevent and reverse overdose than any other group, and deserve recognition and support for that.

Beyond people who use drugs themselves, we wanted to shine a light on some of the lesser-known groups that play a role in preventing and reversing overdose. The "unsung heroes": including pharmacists, jail administrators, café managers, and people who sell drugs.

*[Learn more about how these people reverse overdoses, and how YOU can help alleviate the overdose crisis.](#)*

## **DPA is Hiring: Managing Director of Communications**

## & Chief Operating Officer

DPA has two top-level openings: chief operating officer and managing director of communications. These positions will help lead the organization, and the drug policy reform movement, at this crucial time.

DPA's **chief operating officer (COO)** is a new leadership position intentionally designed to complement our new executive director at this pivotal moment in the organization's growth and a historic moment for the country. Reporting to the executive director and serving as her key strategic thought partner in the day to day operations of DPA, the COO will play a vital role in supporting DPA's sustainability and success. Find out more about this position [here](#).

The **managing director of communications** will also work closely with the new executive director, building on the organization's history and using that momentum to be even more forward thinking, galvanizing, and rigorous. This position will craft the organization's communications strategy, marketing, public voice and messaging, media relations, brand management, and communications with key stakeholders. Find out more about this position [here](#).

## Drug Policy in the News

**USA Today:** House Will Vote on Federal Marijuana Legalization for the First Time, Bill's Future in Senate Uncertain

**The Appeal:** Oregon Could Become The First State To Decriminalize Drugs In November

**Forbes:** Faulty Drug Tests, Solitary Lockup, Lack Of MAT Increase Horrors Of 2020 Life In New York Prisons

**Marijuana Moment:** Youth Marijuana Use Stable Amid Legalization's Expansion, Feds Report

**Filter:** Congress Must Pass COVID-19 Legislation to Depopulate Jails and Prisons

**Vice:** The Defund the Police Movement is Coming for the DEA

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