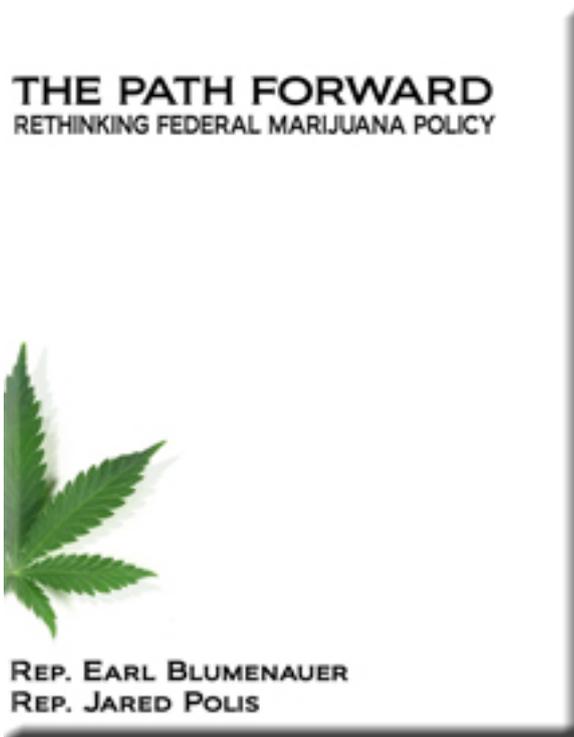


Marijuana policy at the state level has shifted abruptly in recent years as states have moved to legalize t

Representatives Earl Blumenauer and Jared Polis have also co-authored a report “[FAQ on marijuana and marijuana legislation](#)”

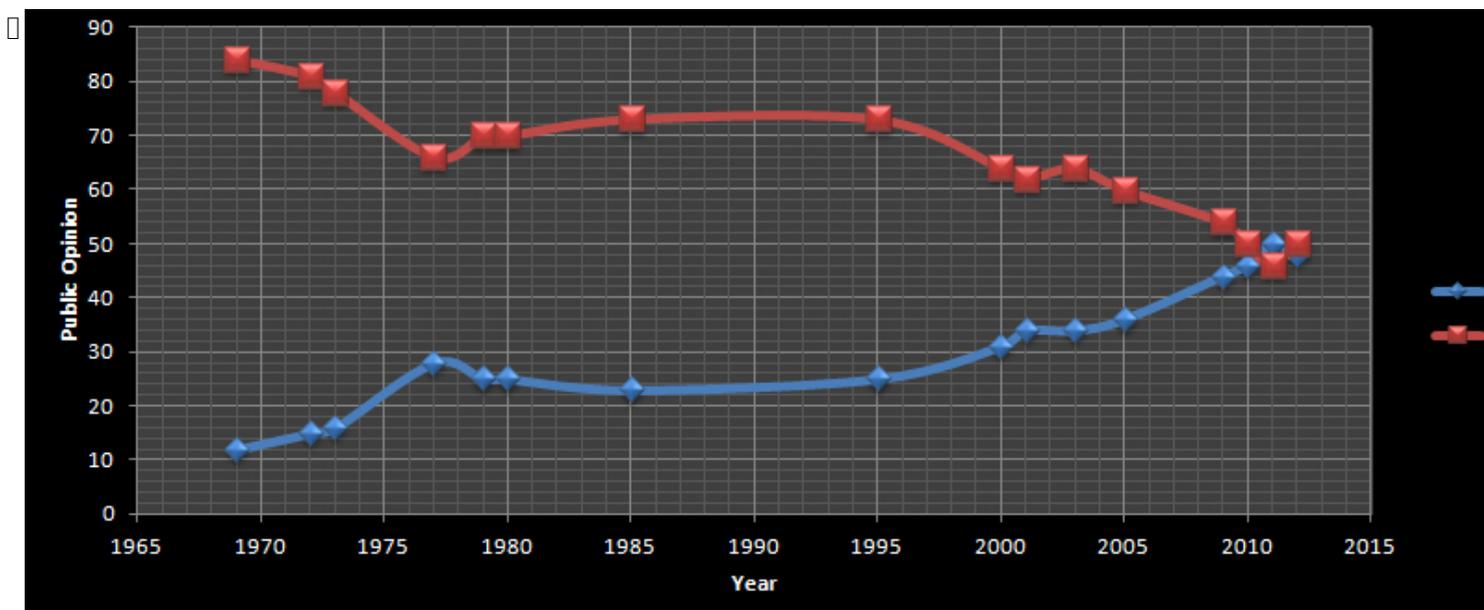


Today over 2 million people are incarcerated in the United States, more than any other country in the world, and 50% of all federal inmates are there for drug-related crimes. This is part of the reason our spending on corrections has increased at a much higher rate than our spending on higher education over the last 20 years.

Millions of people have been caught up in the justice system for marijuana offenses, and over 660,000 are arrested each year for possession. Too often people are serving time in jail for using a drug that nearly half the nation's population feels should be legal for recreational purposes and 70 percent feel should be legal for medicinal purposes.

The rapid spread of legal (under state law) medical marijuana facilities has given hundreds of thousands of people access to marijuana for everything from suppressing the nausea associated with chemotherapy to mitigating the effects of multiple sclerosis and chronic pain. According to the 2010 Census, just over 106 million people live in jurisdictions where their respective government (usually with voter approval) has decided that some aspect of marijuana use should be legally permitted. Last fall, voters in Washington and Colorado approved adult, recreational marijuana use. Studies show that many Americans now agree that marijuana should be legal and support is growing.

Percent of Americans who think marijuana should be legal, over time ([Gallup](#))



The Facts about Marijuana

- Marijuana is the third most popular recreational drug in America, behind only alcohol and tobacco.
- Nearly half of all Americans have used marijuana at some point in their life, either for recreation or medicine.
- On average, nearly 18 million Americans have used marijuana in the last month.
- Marijuana remains illegal on the federal level, which makes it the most common illegal drug used in the United States.
- Marijuana is less addictive than both alcohol and tobacco.
- Other drugs that are currently legal, such as alcohol, tobacco and prescription drugs, have significant health consequences.
- Approximately 80,000 people a year die related to excessive alcohol use.
- Over 10,000 people a year are killed in alcohol-impaired driving accidents.
- Alcohol can lead to cirrhosis of the liver, general poor health, and antisocial and often illegal behavior.
- More than 400,000 deaths each year are attributed to tobacco smoking.
- Since 2003, prescription drug overdoses have killed more people than heroin and cocaine combined.

While President Obama has declared that his administration has “bigger fish to fry” in regards to cracking down on use of marijuana in states where it is legal, far too many US Attorneys and Drug Enforcement personnel are still ‘frying those little fish.’ Only Congress has the power to unravel this mess. It is past time it does so.

Congressman Blumenauer supports legislation that would:

- **Allow states to enact existing marijuana laws without federal interference** – Congressman Blumenauer supports legislation to allow states to enforce their laws without fear of interference by the federal government.
- **Tax and regulate marijuana** – Considering the growing number of jurisdictions that have legalized medical marijuana and the two jurisdictions that have legalized recreational use, it is time that Congress removes the federal prohibition on marijuana. Congressman Blumenauer supports legislation to remove marijuana from the Controlled Substances Act and create a regulatory and taxation framework similar to what is in place for alcohol and tobacco.

- **Remove ban on industrial hemp** – Congressman Blumenauer supports ending the ban on industrial hemp by removing industrial hemp from the definition of marijuana. This would allow a new agricultural industry to begin to flourish in the United States.
- **Allow the marijuana industry to operate in a normal business environment** – Federal banking regulations make it difficult for any marijuana business to obtain loans, open bank accounts, or take advantage of services offered to other businesses. Congressman Blumenauer supports immediately removing tax and banking barriers to allow legitimate businesses to operate in states that have legalized marijuana for medical and recreational use.
- **Create a sensible drug policy working group** – Congressman Blumenauer is forming a Sensible Drug Policy Working Group to educate members of Congress and their staff on the facts of marijuana use and national drug policy, and work to coordinate efforts to pass a comprehensive legislative package to address the issues highlighted above

Right now the federal government is on a path that combines the worst of both worlds. We criminalize behaviors that many Americans think are appropriate and we aren't doing enough to help those who are struggling with addiction to alcohol and other drugs. It is time to change our laws before we travel further down this road with nothing to show but billions of dollars wasted, and hundreds of thousands of damaged lives.