



Warning signs on Colorado's marijuana legalization.

Source: Christian Science Monitor. 2/26/2014, pN.PAG-N.PAG. 1p.

Document Type: Article

Abstract: Colorado voters give high marks to Gov. John Hickenlooper for implementing a law that he opposed: the legalization of marijuana for adults. Two months into legal pot sales in the Rocky Mountain State, however, they might also want to consider what this Democrat is telling other governors about what he calls "one of the great social experiments of the 21st century." [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

Copyright of Christian Science Monitor is the property of Christian Science Publishing Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use. This abstract may be abridged. No warranty is given about the accuracy of the copy. Users should refer to the original published version of the material for the full abstract. (Copyright applies to all Abstracts.)

Full Text Word 602
Count:

ISSN: 0882-7729

Accession 94745088
Number:

[Warning signs on Colorado's marijuana legalization](#)

Listen

Colorado voters give high marks to Gov. John Hickenlooper for implementing a law that he opposed: the legalization of marijuana for adults. Two months into legal pot sales in the Rocky Mountain State, however, they might also want to consider what this Democrat is telling other governors about what he calls "one of the great social experiments of the 21st century."

"I urge caution," he said at the National Governors Association meeting in Washington last week. When states promote something that is not good for people, he said, they need to be prepared for "unintended consequences."

Governor Hickenlooper is certainly getting ready for what surveys indicate will be the most serious consequence: Higher marijuana use by youth. In a message to state lawmakers, he wrote that Colorado's top priority should now be to prevent the negative impacts of legalization on children.

With easier access to the drugs and a subtle message that pot is not dangerous, the state must lessen the effects of a tragedy of its own making. According to the National Institutes of Health, 1 in 6 16-year-olds who tries marijuana will become addicted to it.

Using the expected revenue from taxes on pot sales, the governor wants to spend \$45.5 million for youth use prevention, \$40.4 million for substance abuse treatment, and \$12.4 million for public health. He also proposes a \$5.8 million media campaign on marijuana use, presumably to point out the health risks.

In addition, Colorado police are being trained to better spot stoned drivers. In January, when marijuana sales began, about 15 percent of citations for impaired driving were for people high on pot. A new \$1.9 million education campaign comes with this warning: "Drive High, Get a DUI."

Governors should not be exploring legalization as a revenue windfall, Hickenlooper advises. Perhaps a big reason is that the potential costs of higher marijuana use -- such as lost productivity, broken relationships, vehicle accidents -- could outweigh money collected in pot taxes.

Colorado voters have caught up with one of the governor's original worries about Amendment 64, the ballot measure approved in 2012 that set a national precedent for legalization. In a poll by Quinnipiac University last month in Colorado, more than half of those surveyed said the law hurts the state's image.

The poll also revealed this statistic: Nearly two-thirds of Coloradans would be "very uncomfortable" if they were riding in a car driven by someone who had smoked "moderate amounts" of marijuana.

Colorado's experiment is being watched closely by President Obama. One of his big worries -- besides the cross-border sale of pot that would clearly violate federal law -- is that big business may aggressively push marijuana use.

"If we start having a situation where big corporations with lots of resources and distribution and marketing arms are suddenly going out there, peddling marijuana, then the levels of abuse that may take place are going to be higher," Mr. Obama said in a CNN interview.

In August, Alaskan voters will vote on whether to legalize pot. If it passes, the state will be the third to do so. (Washington State's legalization begins later this year.) Many legalization advocates are waiting until 2016 to put pro-pot measures on state ballots, hoping a high voter turnout in a presidential contest will sweep these measures to victory.

But by then, Colorado could have become a negative role model. Its governor, who is well aware of how to implement this new law, has already warned his counterparts to beware.

~~~~~

By Monitor's Editorial Board, Staff writer

---

© 2014 The Christian Science Monitor (www.CSMonitor.com). Limited electronic copying and printing is permitted under this license agreement. Copies are for personal use only. For re-use and publication permissions, please contact [copyright@csps.com](mailto:copyright@csps.com).