

Abstract

THESIS: The Repercussions of Cannabis Legalization

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PAGES: 64

I used a cost and benefit analysis to compare the legalization versus prohibition models of cannabis legislation to demonstrate that the legalization model will result in the greatest overall benefit to society. The underlying reasons for this societal gain may extend beyond the tangible benefits of additional tax revenue to a decrease in criminal prosecutions based on perceptions of moral correctness and an increased understanding of human faults, such as issues of substance abuse and dependence. A legislative change regarding cannabis use started in California in 1996 and since then has spread throughout the United States. As these trends continue, citizens need to address whether such liberalization benefits the community in general, without disregarding possible detrimental effects on individuals. The most prevalent interpretation of cost/benefit analysis has as an emphasis the greater good for the community as opposed to the individual; therefore, attempts to examine the possible outcomes of legalization must take into consideration this delicate balance to determine whether such changes will have a net positive effect on society.