

# DRUG      LEGALIZATION      FAILS MISERABLY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the failure of drug legalization:

We have been told repeatedly that the “war on drugs” has been an utter failure. That’s because nothing can stop people from using illicit drugs. Worse, our failure to legalize them makes a black market inevitable. Therefore, it makes more sense to regulate drugs and get rid of the black market.

If by failure it means that the law has not prevented people from taking drugs, then this is true. Much the same could be said about wife beating. Should we legalize it?

Many parts of the country have legalized certain drugs, marijuana in particular, yet in virtually every case the black market has increased, not decreased.

In the mid-1990s, William F. Buckley Jr. ran a lengthy piece in *National Review* titled, “The War on Drugs Is Lost.” He and several others argued it was time to legalize all drugs, including cocaine and heroin. That idea was dumb then and it is even dumber now.

In 2019, lawmakers in Colorado made the possession of a small amount of heroin and cocaine a misdemeanor, not a felony. The Democrat-controlled legislature included fentanyl, the most dangerous drug of them all. Colorado prosecutors pleaded with lawmakers to exempt fentanyl—four grams is the equivalent of 13,000 deadly doses—but they refused. What happened? Opioid overdose deaths increased by 54 percent in 2020.

In 2018, Washington’s King County, which encompasses Seattle, and neighboring Snohomish County, stopped charging people for small amounts of hard drugs. Meth overdoses skyrocketed, going

from 18 deaths in 2008 to 197 in 2019. Heroin overdose deaths jumped from 45 to 147 and fentanyl-related deaths climbed from 9 to 196, during the same period. Seattle-radio show host Jason Rantz says decriminalization made “the problems worse.” In fact, he brands it “an unmitigated disaster.”

The notion that drug legalization would put an end to the black market is completely unfounded. A recent editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* on how drug legalization has failed in California explains what has happened, yet the editorial board seems not to fully understand why. The subtitle of the article says, “The black market in pot proliferates despite legalization.” Despite? It would be more accurate to say *because of* legalization.

Whenever and wherever drugs are legalized, there is a spike in illicit drugs. Why? For one, legalization sends a moral message to the public, and that is, despite slogans to the contrary, people will interpret the decision as a green light. That means the market will balloon.

With drug legalization comes state taxes and regulations, both of which are a boon to drug lords; they are wholly unaffected. Moreover, government drug stores will never allow the public to buy an unlimited amount of drugs, nor will they allow for the purchase of every conceivable drug. Thus have they created another loophole for the drug lords to exploit. Nothing can stop this from happening.

Not too long ago, New York Governor Kathy Hochul and New York City Mayor Eric Adams were singing the praises of marijuana legalization. No more.

In 2019, New York lawmakers not only voted to legalize marijuana, they voted to stop those from selling illegal weed from being punished; they were given criminal court summons and a small fine. To show how merciful they were, the legislature gave those previously busted for drugs first dibs

in getting a license to sell marijuana. Guess what happened?

“Truth to tell,” wrote Bob McManus in the *New York Post*, “New York’s plan to legalize weed, turn its distribution over to ex-cons and then scoop up sales taxes while making no serious effort to combat illegal competition always seemed weird.” As he noted, “Used syringes litter city streets; there are pop-up shooting galleries in public spaces—and fentanyl overdoses are pacing an increasingly deadly opioid epidemic.”

Mayor Adams is despondent. “Children are getting high on their way to school. Children are taking these gummy bears. I must be old-fashioned. People don’t realize what’s happening in our country and in our city.”

He’s right. The illegal pot shops are everywhere. Indeed, one is directly across from City Hall.

Hochul is totally confused. She pushed hard to legalize smoking marijuana but now wants a big tax hike on smoking cigarettes. To top things off, she wants to ban smoking menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco, but she is not seeking a ban on flavored vaping products or on fruity-scented marijuana!

There are certain vices that we will never stop. The best we can do is curtail them. But removing from the criminal justice system those vices that have traditionally been prosecuted is the worst possible way to deal with them.