NORML Policy on Medical Marijuana

NORML supports the right of adults to use marijuana responsibly, whether for medical or personal purposes. All penalties, both civil and criminal, should be eliminated for responsible use. Further, to eliminate the crime, corruption and violence associated with any "black market," a legally regulated market should be established where consumers could buy marijuana in a safe and secure environment.

Marijuana prohibition applies to everyone, including the sick and dying. Of all the negative consequences of prohibition, none is as tragic as the denial of medicinal marijuana to the tens of thousands of seriously ill patients who could benefit from its use. This includes cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, AIDS patients suffering from "wasting syndrome," glaucoma patients, and those suffering from chronic pain, rheumatoid arthritis and a variety of spastic conditions such as multiple sclerosis, paraplegia, quadriplegia, and epilepsy. Marijuana should be immediately made available by prescription to seriously ill patients.

NORML first raised this issue in 1972 in an administrative petition asking that marijuana be rescheduled so it could be prescribed as a medicine. After 16 years of legal battles and appeals, the Drug Enforcement Administration's Chief Administrative Law Judge Francis Young found: "Marijuana, in its natural form, is one of the safest therapeutically active substances known to man.... Marijuana has been accepted as capable of relieving distress of great numbers of very ill people, and doing so with safety under medical supervision.

It would be unreasonable, arbitrary and capricious for DEA to continue to stand between those sufferers and the benefits of this substance in light of the evidence in this record." Judge Young further recommended that marijuana be made available as a legal medicine. The DEA Administrator overruled Judge Young, and the Court of Appeals allowed that decision to stand, denying medical marijuana to seriously ill patients. Much of NORML's efforts focus on lobbying both state legislators and Congress to correct this injustice.

NORML also supports the legalization of hemp (non-psychoactive marijuana) for industrial use.