

RESOLUTION ON CANNABIS RELATED CRIMES

WHEREAS, the 2016 Democratic Platform passed by the Democratic Central Committee on July 8, 2016, in addition to endorsing numerous other cannabis reforms, says, "...and we recognize current marijuana laws have had an unacceptable disparate impact, with arrest rates for marijuana possession among African-Americans far outstripping arrest rates among whites despite similar usage rates";¹

WHEREAS, the drug war, specifically the war on cannabis, has been especially devastating to minority communities and families as African-Americans are 3.73 more times likely to be arrested for marijuana than whites² despite U.S. government studies showing a similar use rate among Blacks as whites³;

WHEREAS the ACLU has stated that 52% of all drug arrests in the US in 2010 were for marijuana⁴;

WHEREAS in 2015, U.S. "marijuana arrests were about 13.6 percent more than the 505,681 arrests made for all violent crimes, including murder, rape and serious assaults"⁵, and in Washington State alone, 241,039 arrests for marijuana possession were made from 1986-2010⁶;

WHEREAS, even after release from jail and serving their time, inmates struggle to find work and housing due to arrest records for a substance that is now legal;

WHEREAS, in recent years criminal penalties for cannabis possession, processing, and growing infractions have been considerably lessened;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 25th LD Democrats call on Governor Jay Inslee to expunge all cannabis convictions for actions that are no longer illegal;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 25th LD Democrats call on the Washington State Legislature to pass a bill which outlines a process whereby individuals may expunge their record of more serious cannabis crimes such as larger possession amounts or cultivation;

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the 25th LD Democrats call on the Washington State Legislature to pass a bill that outlines a process by which individuals in prison convicted of cannabis crimes may petition a judge for a reduction of sentence and release.

¹ Democratic National Committee, Democratic 2016 Platform, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/papers_pdf

² ACLU.

³ Harry G. Levine, Jon B. Gettman, Loren Siegel. "Targeting Blacks for Marijuana: Possession Arrests of African Americans in California, 2004-08." Drug Policy Alliance, LA: June 2010. http://www.drugpolicy.org/docUploads/Targeting_Blacks_for_Marijuana_06_29_10.pdf pp 4-5.

⁴ ACLU. "Marijuana Arrests by the Numbers." <https://www.aclu.org/gallery/marijuana-arrests-numbers>

⁵ "Marijuana Arrests Outnumber Those for Violent Crime, Study Finds." Williams, Timothy. The New York Times. 10/12/2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/13/us/marijuana-arrests.html>

⁶ Harry G. Levine, PhD, Sociology Department, Queens College, City University of New York; Jon B. Gettman, PhD, Criminal Justice Program, Shenandoah University, Winchester, VA; Loren Siegel, JD, LS Consulting, Brooklyn, NY. "240,000 Marijuana Arrests: Costs, Consequences, and Racial Disparities of Possession Arrests in Washington, 1986 – 2010." October 2012. <http://www.marijuana-arrests.com/docs/240,000-Marijuana-Arrests-In-Washington.pdf> p. 4.