

12/26/23 As he did last year, President Joe Biden [pardoned “thousands” of persons](#) convicted of marijuana use and possession in D.C. and on Federal lands. He also [granted clemency to eleven Federal prisoners](#) presently serving long stretches for “non-violent drug offenses.” Among those freed is a prisoner serving 20 years for conspiring to distribute meth, and another doing 15 years for conspiring to distribute “at least five kilograms of cocaine and 280 grams of cocaine base.”

12/18/23 A Federal agency, the FDA, regulates medicines. And the Feds have just said “NO” to Georgia’s plan to allow pharmacies to dispense medical marijuana prescribed by physicians. Georgia’s pharmacy board recently started accepting applications, and it’s already licensed 23 pharmacies to do so. But the Feds have warned pharmacies that dispensing marijuana violates Federal law. Unless and until pot is removed from Schedule I (a move is in the works), Georgia’s pharmacies will have to hold back.

12/13/23 On June 6 the Third Circuit Court of Appeals interpreted the Supreme Court’s [Bruen](#) decision to mean that it bars lifetime gun possession bans on persons convicted of non-violent crimes ([Bryan Range v. U.S.](#), no. 21-2835). According to Hunter Biden’s lawyers, that in effect throws out the Federal law [[18 USC 922\(g\)\(3\)](#)] that bars gun acquisition and possession by users of illegal drugs. Such as Hunter Biden, whose admitted marijuana use led the U.S. to prosecute him for having acquired and possessed a gun in Delaware, which is covered by the Third Circuit, for eleven days. (See 10/4/23 update)

12/12/23 Beset by drug abuse and disorder, how can Portland regain its allure? What would bring major retailers back? Oregon’s (Blue) Governor proposes to throttle back on the state’s 2020 decriminalization law, which legalized the possession of small quantities of even the “hardest” of drugs, including fentanyl, heroin and meth. And yes, cops would come back. Other “Blue” places, including Seattle and San Francisco, are following suit. (See 8/1/23 and 1/31/24 updates)

11/28/23 With the settlement of lawsuits that accused New York state of withholding pot sales licenses from worthy entrepreneurs, more than 400 applicants can now move on with the process. That, authorities hope, will quickly increase the number of licensed pot shops (presently there are “only” 27) into the hundreds, even a thousand, and make a dent in the state’s “600,000-pound” cannabis stockpile.

11/16/23 Twenty-one months in Federal prison. That’s the sentence handed down to Virginia mom Deja Taylor, 26, whose six-year old took her gun to his Newport News school this January and gravely wounded his teacher. Taylor, a chronic marijuana user whose home and vehicle were found replete with weed, pled guilty to falsely denying

that she used drugs on the Federal gun-purchase form. A lawsuit filed by the teacher alleging that school authorities ignored warnings the boy was armed is pending. (See 6/13/23 update) NOTE: On 12/15/23 Taylor [drew a 2-year prison term](#) for felony child neglect, to run consecutively to her Federal sentence.

11/13/23 Vehicular manslaughter and reckless driving charges have been filed against Nicholas Joseph Gutierrez, the 23-year old man who plowed into a formation of L.A. Sheriff's recruits who were jogging along a road during a morning run a year ago. More than two dozen trainees were struck; several were seriously injured, and one recently died. According to prosecutors, Gutierrez may have fallen asleep at the wheel, causing his vehicle to veer onto the wrong side of the road. No evidence has been developed to suggest that his actions were purposeful, as Sheriff Alex Villanueva originally suggested. (See 11/17/22, 11/22/22 and 3/4/23 updates)

11/10/23 With the success of an organized, well-funded campaign to "[regulate marijuana just like alcohol](#)," pot's become legal in Ohio. That brings the number of pot-legal states to twenty-four, plus D.C. Whether Ohio's status as a very "red" place implies a change in conservative attitudes, though, is hard to predict. Meanwhile evidence of pot's downsides continues to accumulate. High-potency strains now being legally sold are of special concern.

10/25/23 While riding along in the cockpit of a Horizon Air flight, an off-duty Alaskan Airlines pilot grabbed at controls in an obvious attempt to crash the plane. Crew members forcibly subdued him. Joseph Emerson, 44, has been charged with 83 counts of attempted murder. He reportedly attributed his actions to chronic depression, lack of sleep and, particularly, the recent use of psychedelic mushrooms, which was supposedly the first time he had ever taken them.

10/23/23 A recent academic report on the effects of legalizing marijuana in Illinois indicates that its increased use has led to more traffic accidents, with 37% of drivers in fatal crashes testing positive for pot vs. 35% for alcohol. Other "problem areas" include more children being poisoned by pot, a relationship between pot use and psychoses, and concerns that chronic pot use by expectant mothers has led to more pre-term births. [Report](#)

10/11/23 Overwhelmingly approved by California's House and Assembly, a bill to allow pot dispensaries to serve food and drinks (excluding alcohol) was vetoed by Governor Gavin Newsom. The marijuana industry, which is trying to replace the current "pharmacy-style" approach with "Amsterdam-style" cafes, isn't pleased. But the Gov's thumbs-down was warmly welcomed by the American Cancer Society, which warned of

the “cancer-causing substances found in marijuana smoke.”

10/9/23 Fears that legalization would send “a message of normalization” and lead to misuse led California Gov. Gavin Newsom to veto a bill that would have legalized possession and consumption of magic mushrooms and other psychedelics by adults. But the governor encouraged legislators to return with a bill that provides medical oversight and assures that users don’t suffer from psychoses.

10/4/23 Federal law prohibits illegal drug users from buying or possessing guns. In 2018 Hunter Biden bought a handgun. That required he sign a form certifying he was not addicted to drugs. So he did. Problem is, he had publicly acknowledged being an addict. Recently, his prosecution for that faux-pas was set aside in exchange for his plea to tax charges. But a judge rejected the deal. So Biden has now formally pled innocent to three gun counts. And the tax charges are also likely to come back. (See 8/12/23 and 12/13/23 updates)

9/26/23 A “Research Letter” just published in [*JAMA Pediatrics*](#) reports that marijuana’s widespread legalization and a failure by many online vendors to confirm buyer age has vastly increased its access to children. Most accept payment via “nontraceable” methods and many ship to other States, even those with different laws. According to [a 2022 NIDA survey](#), almost one-third of 12th. graders had used marijuana in the past year, and 6.3 percent used it daily.

8/31/23 Marijuana is presently Federally designated as a “Schedule I” substance. Along with “hard” drugs such as cocaine and heroin, it’s considered highly addictive and without medical use. However, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has recommended it be redesignated as “Schedule III”, a category for drugs, such as some steroids, that are far safer and less habit-forming, and whose unauthorized possession or sale carries far less drastic penalties. [DEA drug schedules](#)

8/12/23 Concerns by the presiding judge that prosecutors and defense lawyers disagree about the fundamentals of Hunter Biden’s plea agreement have led her to set it aside. Biden was scheduled to plead to tax and gun charges, but the terms of the agreement (including whether it bars prosecutors from proffering other charges) and the judge’s proposed role are replete with “technical issues”. A.G. Merrick Garland [has also appointed Delaware U.S. Attorney David Weiss](#) to oversee a broad-based investigation of the President's son. (See 6/20/23, 10/4/23 and 12/13/23 updates)

8/11/23 Federal law prohibits users of Federally-defined illegal drugs, including marijuana, from acquiring or possessing guns [[18 USC 922\(g\)\(3\)](#)]. But the Fifth Circuit

just ruled that this prohibition is unconstitutional, as it runs afoul of the Supreme Court's ruling in [*New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*](#) (June 2022), which requires that gun laws be "consistent with this nation's historical tradition of firearm regulation."

8/1/23 Marijuana can be addictive, and as THC levels increase, dependency can become profound. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, "at least 16.3 million people" suffered from cannabis disorder in 2021. That's second only to alcohol. Users seeking to quit can turn to Marijuana Anonymous for help, but many are reluctant, as the misconception that pot is a harmless, benevolent substance is widespread.

[In 2021 Oregon decriminalized](#) the possession of drugs for personal consumption. Openly using drugs in public can at most bring on a \$100 fine. Portland's sidewalks are consequently crowded by fentanyl addicts and their discards. Unmolested by police, dealers "in ski masks, hoodies and backpacks, usually on bikes and scooters" openly peddle their wares. Street workers encourage users to enroll in treatment programs, but most don't seek them out. Dismayed residents urge that hard drugs be re-criminalized, but champions of the new approach demand more time to make things work. (See 12/12/23 update)

7/31/23 Want to buy pot? Better peel off that cash! To comply with Federal law, which still classifies marijuana as a prohibited substance, Mastercard has instructed financial institutions that pot cannot be purchased on its debit cards. That's upset the marijuana lobby. NORML demands that Congress step in so that the growing number of pot businesses and their legions of patrons "are no longer subject to policies that undermine their ability to conduct transactions safely and effectively."

7/24/23 Ruling in a lawsuit brought by the ACLU, a Federal judge blasted the Kansas highway patrol for disproportionately stopping cars from Colorado and Missouri, two bordering states where marijuana has been legalized. Hoping to find drugs, Troopers then supposedly try to sweet-talk drivers into consenting to a search. Judge Kathryn Vratil found the approach a violation of the Fourth Amendment.

7/3/23 New Jersey, where adult possession and use of marijuana is legal, has sought to keep teens out of the criminal justice system with laws that restrict police from investigating youths for drinking alcohol or having pot. Officers can be criminally penalized for violations, so they typically avoid enforcing liquor and cannabis laws. And youths know that. According to local politicians, that's led to an explosion of disorder on weekends and holidays, with teen mobs running rampant through the Jersey shoreline.

Moves are afoot to roll back constraints on the cops, but their prospects are uncertain. (See 2/23/21 update)

[6/29/23](#) Portland's population numbers have dropped three percent in three years. One reason, it's said, is the city's rising violent crime rate. Murders, which used to average in the low twenties, reached a record 101 last year. Another is the "civil unrest" that began with protests against the killing of George Floyd, which devolved into "nightly clashes" between demonstrators and police. Growing problems with homelessness and hard drug use (it was decriminalized in 2020) are also blamed.

[6/20/23](#) Hunter Biden, the President's troubled son, has long admitted having a drug problem, supposedly brought on by the death of his brother. He's now agreed to plead guilty to misdemeanor tax violations. He is also being charged with being an illegal drug user in possession of a handgun ([18 USC 922\[g\]\[3\]](#)) stemming from his purchase of a Colt Cobra .38 caliber revolver in 2018. But that charge will be held in abeyance and dismissed if he successfully completes a two-year diversion program. (See 8/12/23 update)

[6/14/23](#) Hannah Gutierrez-Reed was the weapons supervisor on the movie set where a live round found its way into Alec Baldwin's revolver, leading to the accidental killing of one person and the wounding of another. Prosecutors who have charged her with involuntary manslaughter allege that her chronic nightly consumption of alcohol and marijuana caused her to be "hungover" and led her to mistakenly load a real bullet into Baldwin's gun.

[6/13/23](#) Newport News, Va. resident Deja Taylor, whose unsecured handgun was used by her six-year old son to shoot his teacher, pled guilty to a felony charge of lying on the Federal gun buying form when she asserted that she was not an unlawful user of drugs. Federal agents had found a considerable quantity of marijuana when they searched her home, and she admitted being a user. Taylor still faces State charges of felony child neglect and reckless storage of a firearm. (See 11/16/23 update)

[6/1/23](#) Progressively-minded elected D.A.'s in several Texas counties have made decisions to not pursue election law violations, abortion cases, and marijuana possession. That greatly displeases the majority "Reds", which includes Texas Governor Greg Abbott. He is soon expected to sign a bill that defines those practices as official misconduct punishable by removal from office.

[5/22/23](#) California pot farms require both State and County licenses. The latter provision is rigorously enforced in Trinity County, where the Sheriff recently raided

three of the 134 farms that lack a local permit (345 are presently licensed). To enforce the \$500 misdemeanor, armed, armor-clad deputies staged elaborate tactical strikes that included killing one of the farmer's dogs. Meanwhile the county is beset with numerous fully illegal (and unmolested) grows that supply the State's illegal retail outlets.

5/15/23 After consuming what they may have thought were marijuana gummies, five Chicago high school students wound up in the hospital. Suspicion is being cast on a local smoke shop that's not licensed to sell marijuana, so it deals in alternatives. Some contain dangerously high levels of delta-8 THC, a psychoactive substance that comes from hemp, marijuana's cousin. But hemp is unregulated. (See 3/18/24 update)

4/13/23 As of July 1st. Maryland will become [the twenty-first state](#) to legalize recreational marijuana. Using pot for pleasure is presently legal in twenty states and D.C. It's also legal in the territories of Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

3/8/23 Even though opponents were outspent "more than 20-to-1," Oklahoma voters rejected a law that would have made it the 22nd. state to legalize recreational pot. Its highly competitive medical marijuana industry struggles for profits, and boosters hoped that full legalization would draw crowds from Texas. But opposition by religious groups, medical authorities and police helped kill the measure.

3/4/23 Twelve of the L.A. Sheriff's Academy cadets who were on a training run when an assertedly "sleepy" driver veered into their formation last November were unable to graduate with their classmates. One remains in critical condition. Some plan to resume their training. So far no charges have been filed. (See 11/22/22 and 11/13/23 updates)

2/25/23 With only three licensed marijuana retailers, New York City admits it has a "proliferation of unlicensed cannabis vendors." Problem is, they're selling to youths, who can now easily buy gummies and candy-like pot snacks fashioned after "Rice Krispies and Skittles." Contaminants and varying levels of THC, which can harm young brains, beset samples bought from twenty unlicensed retailers. And as the city threatens the shops with civil actions, cops shrug their shoulders with an "I told you so."

2/15/23 A proposed California law would let cities permit licensed marijuana retailers to serve food and drink and host performances and other events. According to its sponsors, legal marijuana retailers are struggling to survive, and the change would allow them to offer a full "experience." At present some retailers have partnered with co-located food businesses, but the profits must be shared. A local politician who supports

the measure said that it “might make an opening for people who are otherwise closed off to use of cannabis.” [AB 374](#)

[2/4/23](#) “West Town Bakery,” in Wheeling, Illinois, became the State’s “first cannabis store with a bar and a bakery under the same roof.” A photo in the *Chicago Tribune* depicts employees handling pastries in the clearly well-heeled establishment. For now, though, the spacious and trendy cafe/bar is separate from where marijuana edibles are sold. But the owners hope to add a “consumption area” soon.

[1/21/23](#) At the grand opening of Manhattan’s pioneering recreational marijuana shop, the State’s marijuana chief proudly showed off a container of watermelon-flavored cannabis gummies. Housing Works, the nonprofit that owns the store, displays colorfully labeled cartons containing fruit and even cereal milk-flavored pot. Meanwhile a Columbia University epidemiologist expressed concerns that “mad mango,” “loud lemon” and “peach dream” might entice kids to partake. *Really?*

[1/17/23](#) One week after a drug-related search at a rural California home netted one arrest and the seizure of guns and narcotics, the residence was struck by suspected members of a Mexican drug cartel. Six persons, including a newborn, were shot and killed. According to authorities, meth is produced and both “legal and illegal” marijuana are grown in Tulare County, which is the birthplace of a leading figure of the cartel.

[1/9/23](#) Illinois earned a record \$422 million during FY 2022 from the state’s booming recreational marijuana market, with sales totaling a hefty \$1.55 billion. To boost the number of legal outlets - there are presently 113 along with 21 legal grow sites - the state awarded nearly 200 “social equity” licenses, but many would-be retailers have trouble generating start-up funds. Fifty-five percent of pot’s proceeds go to neighborhood projects, substance abuse and mental health, and crime prevention.

[1/4/23](#) A study about the consumption of marijuana edibles by children younger than six found that reported cases soared over 1,000 percent in five years, climbing from 207 in 2017 to 3,054 in 2021. Most happened in residences, and 22.7% led to hospitalization. Of the children whose cases were fully tracked, seventy percent suffered “central nervous system depression.”

[12/31/22](#) When he was a young man Humboldt Co. (Calif.) pot farmer Johnny Casali did eight years Federal time for growing the evil weed. Now licensed by California, he raises marijuana on a family farm. Pot, though, is still Federally illegal and can’t go interstate. Its abundance within the state means low street prices, and supposedly onerous “taxes, fees and regulations” threaten to drive him and other “legal” marijuana

entrepreneurs out of the business. “It’s the War on Drugs Part II,” he complains.

12/30/22 Located in Manhattan’s trendy Greenwich Village, New York City’s first licensed recreational marijuana shop opened its doors, and a very long line of excited customers began streaming in. After waiting more than four hours, one walked out with two bags. Each contained an eight-ounce of smokable flower, for which he paid ninety bucks. Such prices, said another client, can’t compete with “my buddy around the corner.” So buying from the dispensary can’t be “an everyday thing”.

12/20/22 California legislators introduced a re-do of [Senate Bill 58](#), a drug decriminalization measure. It would permit adults to possess psychedelics including psilocybin (“magic mushrooms”) and mescaline for personal use. LSD and MDMA (“Ecstasy”), which were in an earlier version, would remain illegal. Advocates, including physicians, tout the usefulness of these drugs for mental health. But opponents, including the Calif. D.A.’s Association, worry about the dangers that users could pose to others.

12/16/22 Is research into the health effects of marijuana scientific? Yes says UCLA, whose “cannabis research initiative” has been active for five years. But the *Los Angeles Times* questions the true independence of its efforts, as well as those of UCLA, Harvard, MIT and UCSD, as each has accepted major donations from the pot industry. Ethics experts are also troubled. And a supposedly independent, nonprofit research group that praises pot, [The Wholistic Foundation](#), openly partners with the industry.

12/14/22 Remote Trinity County, Calif. was supposed to be the perfect place to grow legalized recreational pot. But local residents were concerned about environmental damage, and a court ruling about that harm invalidated nearly all the licenses that had been issued. With permitting slowed to a crawl, literally no policing, and illegal growing reduced to a misdemeanor, unsanctioned pot farms are now commonplace. And yes, the environment *has* suffered.

12/12/22 Oregon, which legalized recreational pot in 2014, is beset by illegal pot farms that harm the environment and consume large quantities of precious water. Unlicensed growths are tended by migrants “who live in squalid conditions.” Officers seized 76,930 pounds of weed in a single recent raid. Most illegally grown marijuana is destined for resale in other States, where it fetches far greater profits.

12/8/22 In the second such event at a Southern California middle school in a week, three Moreno Valley students were hospitalized after overdosing on marijuana gummies. A fourth student was treated and released. (See 12/3/22 update)

[12/5/22](#) A free lunch, presentations on cannabis and a “healthy discount” should they wish to make a purchase. That’s what a (natch, also free) “Senior Shuttle” offers residents of an L.A.-area retirement community as it shuttles them to a marijuana dispensary each month. As the *Times*’ “Green Room” section approvingly calls it, it’s a “field trip on a magic bus to get high.”

[12/3/22](#) “They were acting weird, tired, high.” That’s what a 12-year old L.A.-area middle-school student said about three classmates. Ten students, ages 12-15 were examined by firefighters, and seven were taken to hospitals after they reportedly overdosed on marijuana edibles. (See 12/7/22 update)

[11/25/22](#) Clear Creek County, CO deputies Andrew Buen and Kyle Gould were charged with felonies ranging to 2nd. degree murder for shooting and killing a mentally disturbed man who refused to exit his car last June. Christian Glass, 22, called 9-1-1 after getting his vehicle stuck, then negotiated with deputies for an hour while flaunting a knife. Bean-bag rounds and a stun gun were deployed without effect, and when Mr. Glass made what deputies Buen and Gold thought was a threatening move they opened fire. Marijuana and amphetamines consisted with ADHD medication were found in his system.

[11/23/22](#) Miami police arrested Wu Chen, 45, for the “execution-style” murder of four employees, all of Chinese descent, of a rural Oklahoma marijuana farm. Chen reportedly knew the victims and spent some time at the farm before opening fire. Authorities are investigating whether the farm’s license was fraudulently obtained. Licenses for two-thousand of the state’s 8,500 licensed farms were reportedly acquired by fronting local “ghost owners” to pretend that the farms are legitimate, where in fact they’re being operated by unauthorized immigrants and supply the black market.

[11/22/22](#) In a televised interview with his lawyer present, Nicholas Gutierrez, the 22-year old who plowed his SUV into a group of L.A.-area police academy trainees on a jogging run, insisted that it was not intentional: he fell asleep at the wheel while on his way to work. “They tried to say that I did it intentionally, which I didn’t. I kept on telling them I didn’t.” Gutierrez, an electrician, installs solar panels. He was arrested for attempted murder, but the D.A. has not yet filed charges and he was released. His lawyer said that Gutierrez “had no drugs or alcohol in his system at the time of this tragic accident.” No mention was made of the marijuana reportedly found in the vehicle. (See 11/17/22, 3/4/23 and 11/13/23 updates)

[11/17/22](#) During the early morning hours of November 16, seventy-five police recruits

were on a training run near the L.A. Sheriff's Academy. Although they were accompanied by marked cars, drill instructors, and road guards wearing reflective vests, an approaching SUV veered into the formation. Twenty-five recruits were injured, five critically. Police suspect that the driver (he said he was "sleepy") may have been affected by a substance other than alcohol, as he tested clean on a Breathalyzer. Marijuana was found in his vehicle. (See 11/22/22, 3/4/23 and 11/13/23 updates).br>

[11/14/22](#) Colorado voters approved an initiative, effective in 2024, that legalizes psychedelic mushrooms for persons 21 and older. According to the law, the substances are useful for treating mental health conditions. Private "healing centers" where the drugs can be dispensed and used are also authorized. Colorado is the second State, after Oregon, to take this step. (Oregon's law is effective next year.) However, psychedelics remain illegal under Federal law, and critics warn that their value is unproven and they are easily abused.

[11/9/22](#) With voters in Maryland and Missouri saying "yeah!", recreational marijuana is now legal in 21 States. It would have been twenty-four, but voters in Arkansas and both Dakotas rejected the measure. Meanwhile Colorado, where recreational pot's been legal for a decade, is deciding whether to give the green light to some psychedelics. [At present](#) the "yeahs!" are ahead by two percentage points.

[10/31/22](#) In 2018, two years after California legalized recreational pot, [the State enacted a law](#) to expunge pre-existing convictions for purchasing, possessing or cultivating marijuana for personal use, and to reduce the offense level for more serious transgressions. But "tens of thousands" of these convictions remain on the books. Governor Gavin Newsom just signed a bill that sets a July 1st. deadline to remove the blot of these convictions from State records.

[10/17/22](#) News stories in the (pot-friendly) *Los Angeles Times* bemoan the official corruption that's accompanied California's legalization of recreational marijuana. Politicians, including members of city councils, and other government officials have reportedly accepted bribes "ranging from thousands of dollars to hundreds of thousands" in exchange for awarding licenses to distribute and sell pot, and two such episodes have recently led to Federal indictments.

[10/11/22](#) In the normally very "Blue" trending *Washington Post*, a health columnist expresses great concern about the "normalization" of marijuana's recreational use, and particularly about its ability to negatively affect the physical and mental well-being of youths. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse, is quoted complaining that pot's boosters have turned to the same distortions as what happened with tobacco. "The data were manipulated by those who want to promote it. Now,

people say that marijuana is safe and doesn't lead to addiction, but the data show otherwise."

10/7/22 Pardoning "about 6,500" Americans who were convicted in Federal court of simple marijuana possession, President Biden released a statement encouraging States to follow suit and decriminalize the possession of cannabis for personal consumption. He also moved to remove marijuana from the Fed's "Schedule I" list, which includes hard drugs such as heroin and LSD. And while he asked for a review of the drug's Federal status, the President stopped short of calling for marijuana's full legalization.

9/27/22 Last year [Oregon became the first State](#) to decriminalize the possession of drugs for personal consumption. Instead, users now pay a \$100 civil penalty or agree to undergo a "health assessment" that can lead to counseling for substance abuse. But less than one percent of the 16,000 who chose the latter path accepted actual treatment. Meanwhile fatal overdoses increased twenty percent and Oregon's addiction rates remain "among the highest" in the U.S.

9/24/22 Despite California's 2017 legalization of recreational marijuana, only one-third of the State's cities allow marijuana retail stores. That inherently limits demand. Small-scale pot farms are also stymied by the dominance of the large producers who helped fund Proposition 64, and by the massive quantities of cheap (i.e., untaxed) pot produced by the many illegal farms run by organized crime, a problem to which law enforcement only half-heartedly responds. According to a probing series of articles by the *Los Angeles Times*, "weed legalization" has definitely "not met expectations".

9/14/22 The City of Los Angeles requires that marijuana retailers be licensed. But unlicensed pot shops beset the city's Eastside. Despite occasional police raids, they spring right back into business, using lower prices to drive customers away from licensed, tax-paying retailers. Violations are misdemeanors, and D.A.'s are reluctant to press charges. But the few raids that have taken place are eye-openers, revealing sales volumes that can generate \$25,000 worth of revenue in a single day.

7/15/22 An editorial in the *Los Angeles Times*, long a proponent of legalized pot, argues in favor of a proposed law, highly contested by the marijuana industry, that would require prominent warning labels on marijuana packaging. According to the *Times*, there is plentiful evidence that frequent consumption can "contribute to psychotic disorders and suicide attempts," that its use can harm teen's developing brains, and that "adverse effects are more likely in products with high THC concentrations.

[5/5/22](#) In recreational-pot-friendly California, “cannamoms,” mothers who toked up, shared their experiences raising kids while using pot. “Conversations were deeper,” said one. “Our playtime was more enjoyable. In my head I wasn’t thinking about the bills I had to pay and things I needed to get done...” But the leader of “[Parents Opposed to Pot](#)” worries that its use could lead to apathetic parenting. “I’d suggest they find other ways to make themselves less stressed like do yoga or other outside things.”

[4/21/22](#) Florida Agriculture Commissioner Nikkie Fried sued the U.S. for prohibiting marijuana users, including those with a medical prescription, from buying and possessing firearms. [According to ATF](#), Federal gun laws prohibit users of controlled substances, including marijuana, from buying or possessing firearms, and the prohibition extends users of medical marijuana, which is legal in a majority of States.

[4/5/22](#) Since February 2021, when Oregon’s first-in-the-nation decriminalization law took effect, residents caught with personal-use amounts of any drug get a non-criminal citation, and the \$100 fine is waived if they accept treatment. Deaths from opioid overdose, though, have gone up, and only one percent (19) of the 2,000 who got ticketed during the first year have asked for help. That “surprises” the State Senator who chaired the reform. But he’s not yet ready to require treatment (see 2/2/21 entry.)

[3/7/22](#) In an editorial entitled “Are state fair officials high?” the *Los Angeles Times*, whose position normally favors recreational marijuana, challenged a plan by the California State Fair to award prizes to the chemically most potent plants at its July 2022 event. According to the *Times*, “super-potent” cannabis could endanger one’s health, and awarding gold medals to the strongest concoctions is irresponsible. [Cannabis awards site](#) [Cannabis awards criteria](#)

[1/28/22](#) California legalized recreational pot, but it remains a cash business. And in San Bernardino county, deputies working with the FBI are stopping armored cars operated by a logistics firm that hauls cash from marijuana dispensaries. No one’s been arrested, but so far more than \$1 million has been seized and turned over to the Feds “as tied to Federal drug or money-laundering crimes.” Emptyreal Logistics [has sued in Federal court](#) for return of the money. It’s run into similar problems in Kansas.

[1/5/22](#) In 2021, the second year of its legal recreational use, Illinois pot sales hit \$1.38 billion, twice the 2020 figure. Illinois’ pot boom, with a rapid growth in all sectors from farming to retail, is partly due to its role as a source of weed for residents of surrounding States, where its recreational use is not yet legal. Plans to double the number of licensed dispensaries from the present 110 have hit a snag, though, over criticism that the proposed qualification process [unfairly shuts out minority applicants](#).

[12/16/21](#) Malta has just become the first country in the European Union to fully legalize the recreational use of marijuana. It's restricted to adults, cannot be consumed in public and can only be sold by authorized nonprofits. Germany, Luxembourg and Italy are considering similar measures. In Netherlands, Portugal and Spain possession of small amounts for personal use is a civil offense.

[11/22/21](#) Mount Sinai Medical School researchers have linked marijuana use during pregnancy to increased levels of aggression, anxiety and hyperactivity in young children. Cannabis reportedly affects the mother's immune function, which in turn alters the neurobehavioral development of the unborn.

[9/28/21](#) Augmenting the efforts of his predecessor, Los Angeles County's progressive D.A., George Gascon, is dismissing an additional 60,000 marijuana convictions, including about 20,000 for felony possession or cultivation. His move comes under the authority of [Proposition 64](#). Enacted in 2016, it legalized the personal use and cultivation of marijuana and authorized "dismissal and sealing of prior, eligible marijuana-related convictions."

[9/14/21](#) A Federally-sponsored study reveals that the use of marijuana by young adults "increased to all-time highs in 2020" (click [here](#) for the report.) At the same time, marijuana's perceived health risks reached "all-time lows." That troubled Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse. "We know that marijuana use, and particularly when it is in regular use...it's associated to the higher risk of psychosis [and] suicidal thinking..." (click [here](#) for a NIDA news release).

[8/4/21](#) An academic study of the effects of legalizing the recreational use of marijuana on rates of violent or property crime found no statistically significant long-term effects in the first two states that did so, Colorado and Washington.

[8/2/21](#) "How big does Chicago want its pot biz to be?" The *Chicago Tribune* welcomed recreational marijuana, which Illinois legalized last year, as less harmful than drinking, and as a way to avoid needlessly giving folks criminal records. It now worries that pot's booming commercialization is changing how the city "looks." And, too, that it can be misused. "It's better if it's occasionally used, when the adult smoker is in a safe place. Legal doesn't always mean wise."

[8/1/21](#) Helios "Bobby" Dayspring, a major California marijuana grower and distributor, pled guilty to Federal tax and bribery charges for paying off a county supervisor to promote his interests and fend off pot-unfriendly laws. That politician later committed suicide. This prosecution, according to the Feds, is part of "an ongoing public corruption investigation" into the nascent, loosely-regulated pot industry.

[7/17/21](#) A recent academic review of studies about the consequences of marijuana legalization found no evidence that *medical* marijuana laws increased its use by teens. But the findings about the effects of *recreational* marijuana laws were “more equivocal.” One study suggested they were associated with a “modest” reduction in teen pot use ([Anderson et al](#)); two found no change ([Hao and Cowan](#) and [Coley et al](#)); and one ([Hollingsworth et al](#)) reported a “substantial increase.”

[7/12/21](#) Illegal marijuana farms beset California’s deserts. Massive spreads funded by Mexican cartels rely on illegal immigrants and forced labor, destroying the ecology and upending the lives of residents with violence and gunplay. “When our family moved to Twentynine Palms nine years ago, it was peaceful and calm. The invasion of pot farms changed all that.” But State pot laws are now all misdemeanors, while Federal officials say their main focus is on hard drugs and opioids.

[6/7/21](#) An NIJ-funded study revealed that persons who were cognitively and physically impaired by marijuana passed blood, urine and oral tests designed to detect pot’s main components. Common field sobriety tests in current use were found equally ineffective.

[4/4/21](#) New York State has legalized recreational pot. Citizens age 21 can now possess three ounces, and regulations that will permit cultivation and retail distribution will be in place by next year. Officials have high hopes that marijuana taxes will bring in \$350 million per year. But Assemblyman Keith Brown (R-L.I.) bemoaned the move: “I am deeply concerned about the potential impacts legalizing marijuana will have on young adults and our quality of life in New York state.”

[3/12/21](#) “Cannabis use disorder” (use that leads to psychological impairment) is commonplace. But discontinuing the use of marijuana can be difficult. According to NIJ, psychosocial treatments that address “the patterns, thoughts, and external triggers” that lead to its use have proven effective.

[2/23/21](#) New Jersey [joined the ranks of thirteen States and D.C.](#) to legalize recreational marijuana. Adults can possess up to six ounces, but growing pot remains forbidden. Underage use and other violations will be treated as a civil offense. A “regulated market” is in time expected to bring millions into the struggling State’s coffers. (See 7/3/23 update)

[2/2/21](#) Oregon’s [first-in-the-nation law](#) that decriminalizes possession of personal use amounts of all drugs went into effect. Possession is a civil offense, punishable by a \$100 fine. Emphasis will be on prevention and treatment, which will be greatly enhanced with proceeds from the state’s marijuana tax. Possession of larger amounts of drugs and their sale remain crimes (See 11/24 entry.)

1/13/21 On January 12 the 3rd. Circuit Court of Appeal overruled a District Court decision that allowed [“Safehouse,”](#) a Philadelphia non-profit, to open a “supervised injection site” where users inject illegal drugs under medical supervision. According to the Court, such sites, which are open and regulated in portions of Canada and Europe, and have been proposed in the U.S., violate Federal drug laws.

1/11/21 New York Governor Andrew Cuomo’s third attempt to legalize recreational pot is supported by civil rights advocates who complain drug laws have proven systemically racist. But some liberally-inclined groups oppose the idea, which they claim would benefit wealthy businesspersons but cause more impaired driving and increase the use of high-potency marijuana products by youth.

1/3/21 Illinois legalized recreational pot in 2020. [In September](#) the state’s 67 licensees (there are plans for more than twice the number) sold \$68 million of recreational pot and passed on \$20 million in state taxes, nearly as much as for liquor. As the year ended [Governor Pritzker also pardoned](#) 9,210 “low-level” pot convictions and 492,000 misdemeanor marijuana arrest records were expunged.

12/5/20 While a similar move is thought unlikely in the Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives comfortably passed [a bill](#) that decriminalizes marijuana, expunges pot-related Federal convictions, and provides financial assistance for “low-income and minority” marijuana businesses.

11/24/20 As drug overdoses rise throughout the U.S. during the pandemic, Oregon may be hard-pressed to provide the treatment mandated by [its first-in-the-Nation measure](#) that decriminalizes the possession of small quantities of hard drugs. Some also worry that the State’s drug users will now be less motivated to sober up. But supporters of the measure counter that making drugs illegal never helped. (See 2/2/21 entry)

11/5/20 With voters in Arizona, New Jersey, South Dakota and Montana voting “yes,” fifteen states now allow marijuana’s recreational use, and 36 permit its medical use. [Meanwhile Oregon became the first state](#) to partly decriminalize hard drugs, giving persons caught with single-user amounts of heroin, meth and other substances the option to pay a \$100 non-criminal fine and enroll in drug treatment.

8/9/20 Anxieties brought on by the coronavirus lockdown are helping recreational marijuana sales “soar” in Illinois. Preexisting users are also turning to pot more frequently. Thanks to the Governor’s labeling of dispensaries as “essential,” the State also profits. In the *Tribune*’s long article, there’s no mention of pot’s use by teens, nor of any possibly negative health consequences.

6/3/20 Washington state legalized recreational pot in 2012. An academic study that explores police attitudes reveals that they're not necessarily for recriminalizing it. However, officers report greater use by youth, more "drugged driving," and a heavier workload due to more pot-related "nuisance" calls.

3/5/20 A San Francisco-area Superior Court panel ruled that California's legalization of recreational marijuana means that police who stop a vehicle cannot search it based on the odor of pot, or on an occupant's possession of a legal amount.

1/4/20 An academic study in Denver post-marijuana legalization reported statistically significant increases in property crime, and non-significant increases in disorder and drug crime, for areas with retailers of recreational marijuana. Violent crime did not change. No effects were noted in connection with medical marijuana outlets.

8/29/19 Two years after California legalized pot, illegal marijuana farms run by Mexican cartels besiege the state's forests, [causing major ecological damage](#) and threatening wildlife with dangerous pesticides. Meanwhile a profusion of illegal pot shops in L.A.'s low income areas is blamed for worsening violence and decay ([a deadly shooting](#) took place in one this day). Advocates claim the fix lies in more legal more shops, but "most cities" refuse to license them altogether.

3/28/19 [Concerns by black legislators](#) about pot's effects on inner cities and their youth helped torpedo its legalization in New Jersey. [A recent Colorado study](#) reported that its legalization has been associated with its increased involvement in fatal accidents (p. 50) and with increases in emergency room visits (pp. 79-80). Colorado youth are also significantly more likely to use marijuana than the national average (pp. 119-120). [A new study](#) by the Insurance Information Institute indicates that marijuana legalization may be leading to more impaired driving, thus more accidents.

10/17/18 Canada became the first major country to legalize pot, including for recreational use. Its move was criticized by the nation's medical association, which called it an "uncontrolled experiment" that valued private profit over "the health of Canadians."

7/22/18 A recent study about medical marijuana and SMI (serious mental illness) published in the *International Review of Psychiatry* concluded that "liberal laws" and "past year cannabis use" were "significantly associated with higher prevalence of SMI".