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DEAR FRIENDS,

I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR EXEMPLARY COVERAGE OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY NORML CONFERENCE. REGARDLESS OF HOW ANYONE FEELS ABOUT THE PROHIBITION OF MARIJUANA, IT IS CRUCIAL THAT BOTH SIDES BE HEARD, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT AFFECTS MILLIONS OF AMERICANS SO PROFOUNDLY.

IT IS SAID THAT THE ROAD TO RUIN IS PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS AND I DON'T DOUBT THE SINCERITY OF MY ~~MY~~ FELLOW CITIZENS WHO EARNESTLY FIGHT THE WAR ON DRUGS. BUT WHO ARE THE CRIMINALS? ARE THEY REALLY THE CASUAL USERS WHO SHARE A JOINT IN A FRIEND'S LIVING ROOM OR ARE THEY THE POLITICIANS WHO BLITHELY DISCARD THEIR OWN REPORTS AND IGNORE AN IMPORTANT REVENUE SOURCE WHEN OUR COUNTRY SO CLEARLY NEEDS IT? HOW CAN DEMOCRACY WORK WHEN THE INFORMED CITIZENRY IS DENIED AN OPPORTUNITY TO VOTE ON A MAJOR ISSUE?

I LEAVE WITH ONE FINAL OBSERVATION THAT I'VE NOT HEARD RAISED BY ANYONE IN THE MEDIA. I WORK FOR A FORTUNE-500 HIGH-TECH COMPANY WHICH STARTED DRUG-TESTING NEARLY TWO YEARS AGO. SHORTLY AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT MANY OF <sup>OUR</sup> BRIGHTEST EMPLOYEES RESIGNED. THE SAME THING HAPPENED AGAIN WHEN CIGARETTE SMOKING WAS BANNED. SINCE THEN WE'VE HAD A VERY HARD TIME FILLING THOSE POSITIONS DESPITE PAY RAISES AND ENHANCED BENEFITS. MANAGEMENT HAS RECENTLY RESPONDED TO THE GROWING CRISIS BY DOWNGRADING THESE JOBS AND SEEKING TO TAKE UP THE SLACK WITH MACHINES. SOME OF THIS IS SOUND AND WOULD HAVE BEEN DONE ANYWAY, BUT IT HAS FAILED TO SLOW THE DETERIORATING QUALITY OF OUR PRODUCTS OR ARREST THE COMPANY'S SLIDE INTO CHAOS. WE NEED GOOD PEOPLE!

I DON'T SEE THE REPEAL OF MARIJUANA PROHIBITION AS THE ANSWER TO ALL OUR PROBLEMS, BUT THE REALISTIC POSSIBILITIES IT AFFORDS US ARE TOO COMPELLING TO IGNORE. COCAINE USE IN ALL ITS FORMS IS THE DIRECT RESULT OF SUCCESS AGAINST MARIJUANA. OUR CITIES ARE NOT KINDER AND GENTLER, OUR INDUSTRIES ARE NOT MORE COMPETITIVE. EVEN BILL BENNET CONCEDES THE MANY POSITIVE EFFECTS OF LEGALIZATION, HE JUST CAN'T ADMIT THAT AMERICANS MIGHT BE ABLE TO RUN THEIR OWN LIVES. THE DRUG WAR IS THE ULTIMATE INSULT TO THE INTELLIGENCE OF OUR PEOPLE. IT IS FINANCIALLY IRRESPONSIBLE, ~~AN ETHICAL NIGHTMARE~~ MORALLY UNTENABLE, AND DEMONSTRABLY DESTRUCTIVE.

WE'VE STUDIED THIS ISSUE TO DEATH. THE REPORTS ARE IN. NO ONE HAS EVER DIED FROM SMOKING POT, IT HAS LEGITIMATE MEDICAL USES, AND IT WOULD BE A MAJOR NEW INDUSTRY GENERATING TENS OF BILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN REVENUES WHILE PROVIDING A PROFITABLE CROP ~~FROM~~ FOR OUR FARMERS. BESIDES, TO MY KNOWLEDGE NO POLITICIAN HAS EVER LOST AN ELECTION FOR SUPPORTING IT. C'MON AMERICA, LET'S GET OFF THE POT AND VOTE ON IT.

THANKS AGAIN, C-SPAN. I THOROUGHLY ENJOY THE DIVERSE VIEWPOINTS EXPRESSED ON YOUR NETWORKS AND HAVE EVEN CHANGED MY MIND ABOUT SOME ISSUES AS A RESULT. THE MOST IMPORTANT CHANGE IS THAT I DON'T FEEL QUITE SO HELPLESS AND ALIENATED FROM THE POLITICAL PROCESS. I CAN THINK OF NO GROUP IN AMERICA WITH MORE REASON TO FEEL PROUD THAN ALL OF YOU. I FEEL A LITTLE PROUD MYSELF BECAUSE AS AN ACTIVE VIEWER I AM PARTICIPATING IN ONE OF THE GREAT SOCIAL EXPERIMENTS OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

SINCERELY,

AN INFORMED CITIZEN