

Colorado is Headed Down the Tubes

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by Deirdre Reilly

The state of Colorado seems to be going to pot — literally. John Denver used to sing about a Colorado Rocky Mountain high, but he almost certainly never imagined that someday that theme would apply to America's innocent school kids.

In a Colorado State House committee meeting on Monday, patient advocates will be pushing for the use of medical marijuana, in the form of edible pot, in their state's public schools. In the Centennial State, this decision is left to individual school districts — and no school district currently allows it.

So advocates will be pushing hard to make Colorado join New Jersey — the Garden State — as the second state in the country to allow medical marijuana in schools.

Colorado had recreational and medical marijuana sales of \$996 million in 2015, according to The Cannabist. The state also collected more than \$135 million in taxes and fees, and ironically, more than \$35 million is earmarked for school construction projects.

There are several obvious problems with medical marijuana on school grounds — for one, making sure that the patient is the only person who has access to the drug. Secondly, having a school nurse administer medical edible pot when that same school employee is responsible by law for reporting any usage of that same substance is nonsensical. Confusion and opaqueness reign in this debate.

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The fight against marijuana in schools is not without concern for any and all students dealing with medical issues, but about the safety and well-being of all students. "School boards do not lack compassion for students that benefit from medical marijuana," Jane Urschel, a member of the Colorado Association of School Boards, told the Associated Press. "How do you begin to deal with those difficulties in different venues?"

The federal government, anxious to involve itself in progressive issues like LGBT rights in public schools, backs off when it comes to marijuana in or near schools, pushing it back on individual states.

"Marijuana use, cultivation and possession remain illegal under federal law," states Pillsburylaw.com. "However, in response to several states' legalization of medical and recreational marijuana, the DOJ has relaxed its policy on federal prosecution of marijuana crimes."

"Poor old Colorado; if their schools allow edible marijuana on school grounds, they are simply out of their gourds," said Carla Lowe, the founder of CALM, Citizens Against Legalizing Marijuana.

Lowe has been fighting legalized pot in her home state of California and the rest of the U.S. for 40 years. "'If we could just get it accepted as a medicine' has long been the plea — but that has always been a red herring," said Lowe. "The potency of the drug has been increasing right alongside the movement to legalize it."

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Lowe is concerned with the uptick of THC in the product, as well as its long-term effects.

"The problem is that cannabis is a complex drug," she told LifeZette. "There are over 400 chemicals in it. THC, the psychoactive chemical in marijuana, is fat-soluble, so it leaves the bloodstream very quickly. But it then circulates the body until it finds a fatty organ, where it begins to very slowly break down. The brain and the sex organs are the fattiest organs, so they are natural repositories for THC. It takes 25 years for the human brain to be fully developed. Kids are smoking pot, and it's affecting their developing brains."

Lowe says the rise in potency is startling. When she began fighting legalizing pot in California years ago, the level of THC in the product was about one-half to one percent. Now, she says, the potency of street pot in California is 18 to 24 percent THC.

LifeZette asked Lowe to weigh in on another pot issue some states are facing — the proximity of pot shops to public schools.

More than two dozen schools in Denver are now closer than 1,000 feet to shops selling medical or recreational marijuana, as the Denver Post has reported.

This has some city council members worried.

"We are making this attractive to kids and young people," Gina Carbone, a founder of Smart Colorado, which advocates protections for kids against pot, told the Post. "The city should do all it can to keep this away from kids."

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Of Colorado's proximity quagmire, Lowe said, "It was well-documented that there were more pot shops than Starbucks in California, and Colorado is heading the same way, it seems," she said. "This is just unconscionable. The problem with the pot shops is that anyone can go in and buy a bag of weed for any

reason. Then they sell it to the kids; they cut it and sell it to the kids who are literally [a few] feet away from them."

In the face of all logic, Denver Public Schools recently moved two northwestern city schools, the Contemporary Learning Academy and the Denver Justice High School, within close proximity to four marijuana shops.

Justice High School is a charter school for troubled students.

"We tried to find something that is both in the right location where the need is," said David Suppes, the district's chief operating officer, "but also in a location that we think would be a good place for kids to learn."

A Denver parent who requested anonymity told LifeZette, "Colorado is headed down the tubes, as far as I'm concerned. Our state and its schools seem more concerned with these new businesses — and the tax dollars they bring — feeling comfortable in our state than it does with our kids' futures. And the mood is, 'It's not harmful; it's just pot.'"

Said Lowe of the country's acceptance of pot, "We are looking at a diminished generation, a diminished future, and a diminished America."

Her group will fight on, she said.

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