



LAW ENFORCEMENT AGAINST PROHIBITION

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For Senate Bill 1014

Submitted By: John Lorenzo, on behalf of
LAW ENFORCEMENT AGAINST PROHIBITION (LEAP)

RE: Support for Senate Bill 1014,
An act concerning the penalty for certain nonviolent drug offenses
Monday, March 14, 10:00am, Room 2C of the LOB

Thank you for the opportunity to present the views of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP) in favor of Senate Bill 1014. As a law enforcement officer here in Connecticut, I fought against the drug war for 20 years when I served as the Chief of Marine Police for Lake Lillinonah Authority in Brookfield. I am a speaker for LEAP, an organization of 40,000 current and former criminal justice professionals and civilian supporters. We are cops, sheriffs, prosecutors, judges, prison guards and others from nearly every level of law enforcement. Like other law enforcement organizations, LEAP does not endorse or condone the use of marijuana or any other drug.

Decriminalizing marijuana by passing Senate Bill 1014 is a strong step in the right direction. The less time that we as law enforcement spend arresting and prosecuting marijuana users, the more time we can spend keeping our streets safe from violent crime. LEAP strongly supports decriminalizing marijuana to free up police resources to deal with more serious crimes.

Senate Bill 1014 is a well-developed bill to remove the criminal penalty for personal use of marijuana. The bill maintains society's disapproval of drug use by continuing a civil infraction for marijuana. It recognizes that marijuana is a substance that can be abused like any other, but also finds that the benefits of establishing a civil infraction for its possession far outweighs the benefits of criminal treatment of marijuana possession. This finding is consistent with my decades of experience in law enforcement.

First, this bill will provide important efficiencies in resources. Specifically to law enforcement, passing this bill will allow police who are tied up in booking rooms and courts dealing with marijuana arrests to focus on much higher priority law enforcement matters at a time when resources for public safety are scarce and stretched thin.

Second, this bill will provide a much-needed improvement to society by allowing citizens to have a second chance. As I have seen firsthand, arrests and criminal convictions hurt citizens and families in a life-altering way. People with criminal convictions have great difficulty finding jobs. They may lose their opportunity for federal financial aid for college. Their families are hurt and stressed and the person who is arrested is most often unable to reach their full potential.

Please, stop some of these harms inflicted on us by prohibition. Support decriminalizing marijuana and let police get back to protecting all of us from violent criminals and child molesters. We will all be much better off.