

# Forum

to weed, or not to weed?

## Marijuana sparks conversation about proposed act

CALLEY LATHROP

Staff Reporter

Is marijuana really as bad our health teachers say? Or there more to the plant than meets the eye? Bad or good, Oregonians will be choosing sides on the issue, as an act in 2010 could legalize marijuana in Oregon.

"I smoke every day, sometimes multiple times. I think those who are so against it wouldn't be if they were better educated... [the sale] would stimulate Oregon's economy and cops could be able to focus on more important things," an anonymous student said.

Cannabis is the little green plant from which marijuana is made. Tetrahydrocannabinol (also known as THC,) is the chemical in marijuana that affects the brain and causes "psychoactive" effects. Memory, thoughts and concentration are all altered after consumption of marijuana, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Some argue that this drug has beneficial properties, while some simply regard it as a harmful, toxic substance. The truth? It is neither. While marijuana contains harmful ingredients like tar, and smoking it in any amount is damaging to the lungs, it can help relieve symptoms of diseases like cancer and other conditions by producing appetite and relaxing the muscles of the user.

"I see people in my practice all the time who are suffering because of long-

term use. It tends to cause a lack of motivation and productivity. It's a way that people cope with stress and other problems. They become dependant upon it and do not

better than using alcohol because you can still function on a fairly normal level," an anonymous student said.

Obviously, laws need to be changed. No one has ever

take whatever consequences come from it, they have the right to use it," Kevin Bagetta, senior, said.

"Some people think it's not, but it really is dangerous. You're losing brain cells, and more and more is needed to obtain the 'high' each time, which can lead to addiction and use of more dangerous drugs," Alex Hutchinson, senior, said.

Legalization is an option some would opt for, most on the basis of control, regulation and taxation to produce profit and make it harder to afford. In 2010, Oregonians will vote on the Oregon Cannabis Tax Act, which, if passed, will legalize marijuana to be sold to those over 21 in a liquor-store environment. 83,000 signatures are needed by 2010 to get the measure on the Oregon ballot. Supporters of the bill say that, if passed, 90% of the states proceeds will go into the Oregon General Fund-- that could add up to millions of dollars.

"It [legalization] would stop illegal trade and we could put a tax on it to produce revenue. If it were legalized, it should be heavily regulated and expensive, because using it in large amounts can mess up people's productivity and health. Another possibility

would be to keep records of its sale for individuals, that way people are not buying a ton of it. The use of it should be a personal choice, so why not make money off it?" an anonymous student said.

However, one must ask whether or not the money is worth the possible and supposed harmful effects of the drug.

People with debilitating medical conditions, after applying with the Oregon Medical Marijuana Program, can obtain a state-issued card stating that they may smoke marijuana for relief of their symptoms (in moderation, of course).

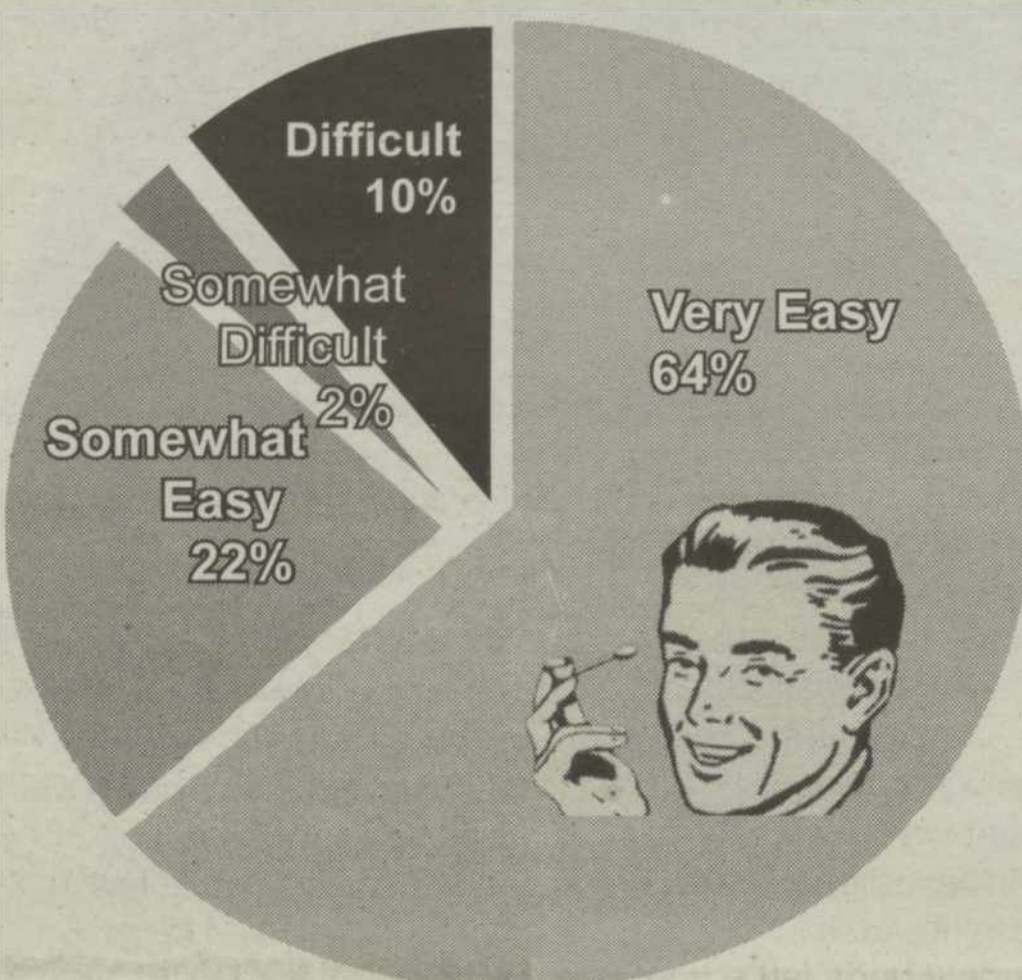
Medical marijuana should be legalized in all states. It relieves nausea and relaxes ones muscles, which can be very hard to do with just a pill. Legalization of marijuana for the public is a different matter entirely. It can have very negative side effects, but also has been shown to be the least addictive drug and has been found to contain more protein, omega fatty acids and fiber than any other plant on earth, according to the Campaign for The Restoration and Regulation of Hemp.

Marijuana

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### Student Survey:

"How easy is it to obtain marijuana in the West Linn community?"



work out their problems.," Douglas Pullin, counselor, said.

Possession of any amount of marijuana is currently illegal in Oregon. However, a 2006 survey by the National Bureau of Mortality showed that an average of 42% of high school students have used marijuana at least once. A staggering 84% say that it is "easy to get."

"I'll use it once or twice on weekends, but not every weekend. A lot of times it helps me to concentrate, honestly. I think it is much

overdosed on marijuana and it is considered the "least addictive drug" by many experts, but the fact remains that it has 20 times as much tar in it as cigarettes, as well as many other harmful chemicals.

Not only is marijuana use rampant across the United States, it also can and has had negative impacts on the lives of students, according to Sue Raivio, English teacher.

"A great number of kids experiment with drugs. A great many don't know when to draw limits, so for some the cycle [of use] becomes very hard to break. We, as parents, don't often recognize it, but regardless it can lead to serious problems in school and at home," she said.

"MANY people in this school have used or regularly use marijuana, and it is often no secret," an anonymous student said. "I know a ton of people who use it, and even more who have at least tried it. It's so easy to get, many people don't even think about the fact that it's illegal."

However, many opt to never experiment with the drug.

"It's a person's choice whether they want to do it or not. I should not be able to make that decision for them. Yes, it's bad, but as long as they are not negatively affecting others because of their use and are willing to

## Amplifier

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### The TRUTH about marijuana

Marijuana arrests in the United States have increased by over 138,000 since 2000.

Although US law classifies marijuana as a Schedule I controlled substance, which means it is potentially addictive and has no acceptable medical use, a number of patients with chronic illnesses claim that smoking it has helped with nausea and relaxed their muscles.

Regular smoking of marijuana has shown to cause lung damage, however, moderate use has shown little impact on the lungs and other organs.

It contains the same potency today as in the 1960s and 70s, when marijuana usage was also common.

Jane. Mary Jane. One of many slang terms for marijuana. Including: ganja, dank, hooch, chronic and blunt.

Urine tests can detect THC metabolites in urine for various amounts of time based on height, weight and metabolism.

A common reaction to marijuana is "acute panic anxiety," one psychoactive effect that is caused by THC's reactions with THC receptors in the brain.

Nonusers of marijuana usually have the same grades and productivity in college than periodic users. Among high-schoolers, marijuana use is usually paired with difficulty in school.

A small minority of Americans, less than 1 percent, smoke marijuana on a daily basis. An even smaller minority develop a dependence on marijuana. However, 42% of high-schoolers say that they have tried or used marijuana.

All statistics from National Institute on Drug Addiction and MarijuanaFacts.org