Rena Ren

Brendan Shapiro

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With the passage of Colorado Marijuana Legalization Amendment, or Amendment 64 in 2012 that removed prohibition of marijuana, the state inaugurated for-profit commercial marijuana industry that boosted the local economy. Despite severe health and social damages that marijuana causes on youth, advertising agencies realizes the potential of the growing pot industry as they utilize cannabis ads that stack on their revenue stream. Many parents complain that unrestricted press of cannabis advertisements are too visible to children and they fear “abusive use of cannabis ads would increase the use of marijuana on nonmedical users and draw young people to drug addiction” (Ren 1). A year after Colorado’s legalization of marijuana, it became problematic when the state government attempted to restrict cannabis advertising by prohibiting magazines that published cannabis ads on store racks. In addition, Colorado imposed a law that banned cannabis ads in several media and publications including radio, TV, and teenage magazines with more than 70 percent of audiences under the age of 21 (Sullum). Many publications such as *High Times* and *Westword* magazines refused to comply as they argued that advertising by state-licensed pot shops “constitutes protected commercial speech because it addresses lawful activity…and is not deceptive, false, or misleading” (qtd. in Sullum). It is clear that the First Amendment protects commercial speech as long as it is true and lawful, but is selling marijuana a “lawful activity” under the federal courts? Although objections to Colorado’s restriction of commercial speech still remain unanswered by the courts, some experts have suggested alternatives to prevent young drug users. Rather than heavy regulation on cannabis advertising, marijuana-legal states can potentially reduce health and social risks by enforcing better education as well as possibly imposing a government monopoly on marijuana as done to the alcohol industry in the United States.

The major concern of legalization opponents is nonmedical use of marijuana among minors who are illegal to purchase the drug. As a matter of fact, cannabis advertisements increase the potential of young teenagers to try the drug in the future. A recent research on *Medical Marijuana Ads and Intention and Use during Middle School* surveyed more than 8,000 Southern California middle school students. One of the authors of this study, Elizabeth J. D’Amico, reports on the *RAND Corporation* that “youth who reported seeing any ads for medical marijuana were twice as likely as peers who reported never seeing an ad to have used marijuana or report higher intentions to use the drug in the future.” The negative influence of marijuana advertisements on adolescents is substantial, but government’s attempts to regulate cannabis ads run into barriers as well. Considering the case of High Times magazine in Colorado, restricting publications of cannabis ads is not an ideal solution to limiting minors on buying the drug.

Young adults who have tried marijuana are also potential users for other severe drugs such as cocaine and heroin. Studies show that “marijuana users at college are more likely than non-users to engage in heavy drinking, to use additional drugs, and to consume these substances in a ‘party’ environment that encourages high-risk consumption and often risk-taking behaviors” (Weiss and Wilks pg#). Marijuana users not only risk their body health, but also risk their social lives. According to Nicole Walden and Mitch Earleywine, two recognized researchers on cannabis-related problems, cannabis use is positively correlated to social problems including “getting into trouble at work, getting into fights, or losing friends” (3). Although marijuana is considered a modest drug, but the social and health consequences on young drug users is inevitable.

Many advocates of marijuana legalization argue that drugs like tobacco and alcohol are way more damaging than marijuana, yet prohibition failed because it has become a necessity in American’s life. Based on a research by Columbia University in 2010, deaths caused by alcohol and tobacco outnumbers marijuana by far (…). It is true that marijuana is not a healthy substance, but drugs like alcohol and tobacco are much deadlier in our lives. Paul Armentano, the deputy director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), advocates in his debate that “It's time to stop stigmatizing and criminalizing tens of millions of Americans for choosing to consume a substance that is safer than either tobacco or alcohol.” If tobacco and liquor are legal, so should marijuana. Armentano realizes that prohibition on marijuana would be nearly impossible because the “use of cannabis is rising and has now surpassed the number of teens consuming tobacco.” Consider the Prohibition of 1920s that “took away license to do business from the brewers, distillers, vintners, and the wholesale and retail sellers of alcoholic beverages;” citizens protested, smugglings, and violent black market emerged (“Why Prohibition?”). Instead of creating a healthier life standard by cutting down alcohol consumption, crime rates increased. The legalization of marijuana should, indeed, consider lessons learned from the past.

Abolishing the thought of prohibition, Armentano proposed an approach that could minimize the use of marijuana among teens. He concludes his debate that “it's legalization, regulation and public education—coupled with the enforcement of age restrictions—that most effectively keeps mind-altering substances out of the hands of children.” Despite the regulation on cannabis advertisements, public education can be more focused on. D’Amico also believes education can reduce the probability of teens using marijuana even after viewing medical marijuana advertisements. Advertisements typically only reveals only the good side of the product that attracts consumers. Many adolescents believe marijuana does little harm or can even be beneficial because of its medical purposes, therefore, they are more vulnerable to advertisements. Thus, D’Amico propose that “prevention efforts must begin to better educate youth about how medical marijuana is used, while also emphasizing the negative effects that marijuana can have on the brain and performance.” The better knowledge one has on the dangers of the drug, the less likely he or she will be to engage in drug use.

Colorado has already taken action to educate its citizens on marijuana in the recent years by making cannabis information available to public. In 2014, the state launched the website Colorado.gov/marijuana that answered questions about legalized cannabis, including its health impacts (Kennedy). The website was created by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), which is “funded to provide education, public awareness and prevention messages for retail marijuana.” The group has requested $3.7 million to advance its research to keep the website updated with recent educational materials (Kennedy). Starting this year from January, CDPHE has held a statewide “Good to Know” campaign that educates the general public on legal use, retailers on the importance of preventing youth access, high-risk populations, and the overconsumption of edibles. However, the effectiveness of these campaigns are still under analysis to be finalized.

Only relying on education is not enough to limit drug users. As Armentano said, regulation and education come hand-in-hand to prevent adolescents from getting attracted to misleading marijuana advertisements. However, Colorado’s regulation on cannabis ads does not seem efficient and the issue rose controversy on how cannabis ads should be regulated. In D’Amico’s article, she suggests that marijuana regulation could “mimic regulations in place that govern advertising of alcohol and tobacco.” Indeed, cannabis followed the alcohol and tobacco regulations that advertisements can only be placed in media where 70% of the audience is over the legal consumption age, and advertisements must not use cartoon characters that are appealing to kids. Supporters of these regulations include Attorney Vincent Sliwoski, an expert in cannabis lawsuit who “expects the Oregon Liquor Control Commission to restrict pot advertising similar to the way Washington and Colorado have done, likely following current tobacco and liquor ad rules” (qtd. in Deutsch). However, Colorado’s attempt to impose regulation on pot publications does not seem efficient even though it mimicked tobacco and liquor ad rules. According to the article “Considering Marijuana Legalization: Insights for Vermont and Other Jurisdictions,” “Most of the limits on alcohol and tobacco advertising have come from voluntary agreements and court settlements, not legislation” (62). *High Times magazine* and two other publications untilized this weakness to argued their right to commercial speech guaranteed in the First Amendment. Thus, the argument with advertisement regulations infinitely revolves and policy makers may need to seek other approaches on marijuana regulation.

The alcohol industry in the United States remains mostly unscathed by broad sweeping regulations on marketing and advertising. “We’ve all seen the annual [Budweiser commercial](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAsjRRMMg_Q) on Super Bowl Sunday where the golden retriever puppy makes friends with a Clydesdale horse,” said Jeff Madrek on his Drug and Policy blog post.

Although the solution to limit young marijuana users by advertising regulation encountered obstacles, the marijuana industry could be regulated effectively under government monopoly. This solution is suggested by Jonathan P. Caulkins, the professor of Operations Research and Public Policy at the Heinz School of Carnegie Mellon University, and his colleagues. Caulkins and his colleagues state in the research that “if a government monopoly controlled supply, firms would have no incentive to spend their money promoting consumption of the government’s product, even if they technically retained that right,” then the problem with advertising restriction would be solved (62). Regulation of marijuana could possibly follow the path of alcohol industry in some states where alcohol production and retail sales is directly controlled by the government. Ever since the Prohibition in 1934, some states, such as Pennsylvania, Utah and Washington, monopolized sales of all types of alcohol (Buntin). Some Scandinavian countries have taken similar effort to cut down alcohol consumption. Public health experts say it works. Indeed, alcohol consumption in Virginia and eight other ABC (Alchoholic Beverage Control) states show 16-20% less than decontrolled states, and accidents from drunk-driving are lower as well (America's weirdest government monopoly). Essentially, government monopoly on marijuana would be able to minimize marijuana users and prevent health and social risks. Alexander Wagenaar, an epidemiologist at the University of Florida College of Medicine and one of the nation’s leading experts on post-Prohibition alcohol regulation, also supports the monopoly approach on marijuana. He says in an interview, “To have the market for marijuana be totally controlled by a state agency that has a mandate to protect public health and safety -- basically, a system that would be run by the health department and not the revenue department -- that would really change the dynamics and incentives.”

However, in order to turn marijuana into a government monopoly, it must require legalization of marijuana in the entire United States because “A US state cannot participate actively in cannabis distribution in the face of a continued national prohibition” (Caulkins 869). Although several US states are in the process of legalizing marijuana and a few states already succeeded, abolishing “national prohibition” on marijuana seems unlikely in the near term. Consequently, government monopolies also raise concern about inefficiency and political corruption.

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