

Stopping Marijuana Legalization in Florida

Marijuana supporters are trying to legalize the drug in Florida once again. Three constitutional amendment efforts are under way in the Sunshine State.



Marijuana advocates are at it again in Florida. Three constitutional amendment efforts are under way in the Sunshine to legalize the drug. What can be done to stop this? A lot.

NOPE Task Force asked Steve Casey, executive director at Florida Sheriffs' Association, to update us on where marijuana legalization stands in Florida and what we all can do to prevent these amendments from passing. Learn more at [Don't Let Florida Go to Pot Coalition](#).

1) What's the latest on the marijuana initiative in Florida?

Steve Casey: In 2014, the Sheriffs led the effort via the "Don't Let Florida Go to Pot Coalition" to defeat the ballot amendment that would have legalized medical marijuana. Currently, there are three constitutional amendment efforts under way to legalize marijuana. One would legalize medical marijuana, another would legalize recreational marijuana and a third would make marijuana a dietary supplement. All of these efforts, if passed, would make marijuana much easier to get and put our youth and the community at risk.

2) If marijuana is legalized in Florida, what impact will that have on youth and their families?

Steve Casey: Research tells us the legalization of marijuana will negatively impact youth and their families in a number of ways. First, legalization will send the message to our youth that marijuana is socially acceptable thus increasing the incidence of recreational drug use. Second, studies show legalization will lead to increased accidents, injuries and medical emergencies. Third, evidence suggests that use of marijuana leads to reduced academic achievement, and for some, it serves as a gateway to further alcohol and drug abuse. Prolonged and chronic use of marijuana puts unneeded stress on the family unit as a whole and severely strains family relationships.

3) What can be done to prevent marijuana from being legalized in Florida?

Steve Casey: To address this, we must actively inform our friends and neighbors of the dangers associated with the legalization of marijuana and unite to ensure these amendments are not placed on the ballot in 2016. We can do this via a grassroots effort in partnership with our schools, churches, social networks, community organizations, home owner associations, and local and state anti-drug groups. The sharing of information will be the key to our success.

4) How can individuals and community organizations get involved in fighting legalization?

Steve Casey: We are more effective when we unite into groups. Look for a group in your community that opposes the legalization of marijuana and then join them. They are always looking for motivated members. If such a group does not already exist in your area, then consider creating one. Once you have joined or established a group, then look for ways to get your message out. This can be done via social media (i.e.: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, Periscope, etc.) hosting local rallies, and participating in community activities where you can hand out flyers educating the public on the issue. You can write letters to the editor of the local newspaper expressing your concern. You can also volunteer to speak to local groups about the issue to educate them and solicit their support. Working to defeat these efforts will not be easy but it can be done. Our quality of life is important, so we must be willing to work hard to protect it.

Learn more at [Don't Let Florida Go to Pot Coalition](#).

Steve Casey was appointed as the Executive Director of the Florida Sheriffs Association (FSA) in 2010. FSA was established in 1893, and is the largest state association of its kind in the nation. Prior to this appointment he served as the FSA Assistant Executive Director of Operations. Steve has three decades of criminal justice experience. During his career he has served as: the Executive Director of the Florida Criminal Justice Executive Institute at FDLE, the Deputy Secretary of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice; the Chief Deputy of the Monroe County (FL) Sheriff's Office; the Director of Security of the Florida Lottery; the Special Agent Supervisor in the Key West Office of the Florida Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco.