

Libertarians Have Later Deadline for Vote Smart

Written by Letter to Editor

Tuesday, 01 October 2002 18:00

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I'm writing to update information in a recent article ("Keeping Voters in the Dark," River Cities' Reader Issue 393, September 25-October 1, 2002). As a candidate for the 43rd State Senate District, I was listed as "did not respond but is not listed on Project Vote Smart literature. " Because of relatively late deadlines in Iowa for finalizing candidate selections, some candidates only recently received copies of the survey from Project Vote Smart (PVS). I have, in fact, responded to the questionnaire and just today confirmed with PVS that it has received it.

I'm a big supporter of candidate disclosure and a fully informed electorate. While some candidates may wonder about the motives of those sending out surveys, I wonder about the motives of candidates who won't answer a broad-based, unbiased survey like the National Political Awareness Test (NPAT).

By the way, PVS gave our candidate for governor, Clyde Cleveland, a deadline of October 9 for his NPAT questionnaire, and he will meet that deadline.

Rich Moroney
Davenport

No Case for War with Iraq

Last week I heard a talk by Scott Ritter, an intelligence officer during the Gulf War and then a weapons inspector in Iraq for seven years. The point of his remarks was simple: There is simply *no evidence* of a build-up of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The fact that world leaders have been debating this issue for weeks means we have no hard evidence of an imminent threat from Iraq. If it were real, we would already be at war.

While George Bush beats the drums for *his* war, he has failed to convince us that there is a case for mass bloodshed. The president has abandoned his official duties to become a full-time fundraiser for his party while he attempts to sell his war plans.

The president is using national security as a smokescreen to hide issues he has failed to deal with at home, like our sliding economy, prescription-drug coverage for Medicare, and the millions of dollars of savings that have been lost in the stock market.

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It is time to speak up. Ask your senators and representatives to demand a return to weapons inspection in Iraq instead of a senseless war.

Gerald Neff
Pleasant Valley

Marijuana Prohibition Costs Everybody

“For nothing is more destructive of respect for the government and the law of the land than passing laws which cannot be enforced. It is an open secret that the dangerous increase of crime in this country is closely connected with this.” Albert Einstein said this in 1921 referring to alcohol prohibition, but this statement stands true in a different aspect of today’s society: marijuana prohibition. Why is such a harmless plant so hated in our open-minded society?

In 1919, the 18th Amendment restricted use and manufacture of all alcoholic beverages. Suddenly honest and hardworking citizens of the United States of America were made into criminals. This prohibition led to underground breweries, gang development, and low-grade alcohol that led to death or illness. Crime rose to an all-time high, but finally in 1933, politicians repealed the 18th Amendment, and one even stated that prohibition strikes a blow to the very principles upon which our government was founded.

Before Ronald Reagan started his “War on Drugs,” the national crime rate was declining, but when the new wave of drug laws hit, crime rose 32 percent between 1976 and 1985. Most violent crimes are committed by drug dealers and not the drug users. The war on drugs drives prices up by making their supply scarce, which attracts more dealers. When a profit is to be made, dealers will go to extremes, including violence, to make that profit. Marijuana is the third largest import, bringing \$13.5 billion to \$20.5 billion a year to the United States; unfortunately the only people who see this money are drug dealers.

The government spends \$1.2 million dollars a year on drug prevention. They could make \$10 billion a year if marijuana were legalized with import tariffs and sales tax. Hemp can be grown without chemical fertilizers or pesticides and nourishes the soil. Fuel, clothes, cosmetics, paper, snow boards, soaps, salad oil, and low-fat cheese are just a few of the things that can be made out of hemp. Because it’s illegal to grow hemp in the United States, all these have to be imported, which costs the government money.

The truth is that marijuana is the safest way of getting intoxicated. Hundreds of thousands of people die from alcohol and tobacco every year. No one has ever died from exclusive marijuana use. Marijuana’s lethal dose compared to its effective dose is 40,000 to 1 as compared to 10 to 1 for alcohol and 20 to 1 for aspirin. Marijuana has no addictive agents at all. It is impossible to become physically addicted to it. Dr. Donald Tashkin, professor of medicine at UCLA, said there was “no conclusive evidence that prolonged use of marijuana causes changes in the brain or in behavior that are not reversible once drug use is discontinued.”

Over 40 million Americans use marijuana, and most do so moderately and responsibly. The small percentage of abusers needs our help, not our persecution. When marijuana was

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legalized in Amsterdam, there was no rise in use, and there was a 33 percent drop in heroin use. This may not be true in the United States, but legalizing marijuana breaks the association between marijuana and actually harmful drugs.

The “War on Drugs” has become exactly that, a war. In December 1989, 20,000 U.S. troops invaded Panama to capture a drug lord; they trampled on 1,000 innocent Panamanians’ lives. In July 1990, *Newsweek* ran an article about how the Pentagon planned to invade South America to attempt to destroy the drug trade in a very violent manner. The mission was aborted due to the publicity. Last year there were over 400,000 arrests in the United States related to marijuana. The average time served in prison for selling marijuana is four years, compared with just one year for rape or manslaughter.

If marijuana were legalized, billions of dollars could be made to reduce taxes and national debt, with money left over. Harmful drug use may drop, the crime rate will drop drastically, and law-abiding citizens won’t have to fear their own government, which claims to protect them.

Nevada is voting on the legalization of marijuana in November; maybe Iowa should follow its lead and see what Iowans really want.

Chris Throssel
Eldora, Iowa