



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on April 5, 2012

State Lawmakers Blast Obama's War on Medical Marijuana

On the campaign trail, Obama [claimed repeatedly](#) that, if elected, he would stop federal interference in jurisdictions where voters and legislators had chosen to legalize cannabis as medicine. In 2007, he said persecuting infirm people for using medicine that is legal at the state level "makes no sense" and is "not a good use of our resources."

"What I'm not going to be doing is using Justice Department resources to try to circumvent state laws on this issue," Obama promised. After winning the presidency, however, Obama has waged the war on medical marijuana with more ferocity than even former President George W. Bush.



Early this week, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) [raided](#) "Oaksterdam University," a California-based educational institution training students to work in the state's booming medicinal cannabis industry. Several pharmacies selling legal medical marijuana were also targeted.

It was not immediately clear why the institutions were attacked by the administration. Officials declined to comment, saying only that they had a warrant.

Outraged state lawmakers and activist organizations responded after the federal raids by calling for Obama to uphold his campaign pledge to end the war on medical marijuana in states that have legalized it. Citing a variety of arguments, critics of the heavy-handed policies publicly blasted the President and his administration.

The coalition of legislators — two Republicans and four Democrats from California, Washington, New Mexico, Maine, and Colorado — attacked what they called Obama's "zealous and misguided war on medical marijuana." Under America's federal system, the lawmakers observed, states are allowed to chart their own course. Indeed, the [Tenth Amendment](#) makes that crystal clear.

The legislators also slammed the federal government's peddling of false information related to marijuana's broad range medicinal uses — the feds claim there are none. And the apparent federal effort to ensure that the market is controlled by criminals came under fire in the letter as well.

"States with medical marijuana laws have chosen to embrace an approach that is based on science, reason, and compassion," the lawmakers [wrote](#) in the open letter to Obama. "The laws were drafted with considered thoughtfulness and care, and are thoroughly consistent with the American tradition of using the states as laboratories for public policy innovation and experimentation."

While each of the states has different laws and regulations governing the use and distribution of



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medical cannabis, the policies are all motivated by a desire to protect seriously ill patients and provide safe sources of medicine, the letter stated. Plus, all of the state governments decided it was time to stop wasting scarce law enforcement resources on punishing severely ill people.

“Unfortunately, these laws face a mounting level of federal hostility and confusing mixed messages from the Obama Administration, the Department of Justice, and the various United States Attorneys,” the lawmakers complained. And it is getting worse.

Despite some initial relief from federal persecution when Obama took power, they wrote, more than a few federal prosecutors have recently been attempting to improperly influence states’ legislative processes. In several instances, state officials including Governors have even backed down under pressure from the administration.

Incredibly, the U.S. government has even threatened state officials with criminal prosecution. “It defies logic and precedent that the federal government would start prosecuting state employees now,” the lawmakers explained. “Nonetheless, the suggestion that state employees are at risk is having a destructive and chilling impact.”

But the people’s state representatives are getting fed up, according to the letter. “We, the undersigned state legislators, call on state and local officials to not be intimidated by these empty federal threats,” the lawmakers declared. “Our state medical marijuana programs should be implemented and move forward. Our work, and the will of our voters, should see the light of day.”

The letter called on the federal government to stop interfering with state decisions concerning medicinal cannabis regulation. It also asked Obama to stand by his campaign promises, respect state laws, and stop issuing threats.

“Let us seek clarity rather than chaos,” the lawmakers pleaded, asking Obama not to use state employees as “pawns” in his “misguided” war. “Don’t force patients underground, to fuel the illegal drug market.”

After the April 2 raids in California, a coalition of six prominent activist organizations — including a group of current and former law enforcement officers — also blasted the administration for terrorizing people involved in the lawful medical industry. The [open letter to Obama](#) was signed by the Drug Policy Alliance (DPA), Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP), the Marijuana Policy Project (MPP), the National Cannabis Industry Association (NCIA), the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), and Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP).

“Our coalition represents the views of tens of millions of Americans who believe the war on medical marijuana patients and providers you are fighting is misguided and counterproductive,” the letter stated. “As your administration prepares to release its annual National Drug Control Strategy, we want to speak with one voice and convey our deep sense of anger and disappointment in your lack of leadership on this issue.”

The groups pointed out that state laws legalizing the production and distribution of medical marijuana “shift control of marijuana sales from the criminal underground to state-licensed, taxed, and regulated producers and distributors.” But instead of celebrating or even just tolerating the state schemes — which starve cartels of profits while offering benefits to patients — Obama has allowed authorities to trample all over medical providers, they wrote.

“The National Drug Control Strategy you are about to release will no doubt call for a continuation of



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policies that have as a primary goal the ongoing and permanent control of the marijuana trade by drug cartels and organized crime,” the letter charged, noting that 50,000 people have died in Mexico over the last five years due to the drug war. “We cannot and do not endorse the continued embrace of this utterly failed policy.”

Instead, the organizations said, they stand with Latin American leaders, the Global Commission on Drug Policy, and the vast majority of people who voted Obama into office in recognizing that the time has come for a new approach to marijuana policy. “[W]e hope that you will immediately reconsider your drug control strategy,” the letter concluded.

As Obama continues to demand a [more vigorous](#) global drug war, policy makers [around](#) the [world](#) are increasingly [searching](#) for [alternatives](#). Portugal and the Czech Republic, for example, legalized all drugs. And the [results](#) have been encouraging: less drug abuse, less crime, and less government.

Meanwhile, Latin American leaders, despite fierce pressure from the Obama administration, are [openly contemplating legalization](#) of narcotics as well. The U.S. government, [on the other hand](#), is now seeking to [step up its unconstitutional federal war](#) and even [deepen the involvement of the American military](#).

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