

About Us



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1. Who We Are

ProCon.org is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit public benefit corporation that has no government affiliations of any kind.

Our purpose is educational. We do not express opinions on our research projects, but believe that most people care about their community, their state and their country, have common sense and good judgment and can better exercise their actions if the large volume of data and rhetoric on an issue is reduced to a fairly crafted ProCon presentation.

Our goal is to research issues that we feel are complicated and important and work to present them in a balanced, comprehensive, and straight forward pro-con format.

"When these difficult Cases occur, they are difficult chiefly because while we have them under Consideration all the Reasons pro and con are not present to the Mind at the same time... To get over this, my Way is, to divide half a Sheet of Paper by a Line into two Columns, writing over the one Pro, and over the other Con.... And tho' the Weight of Reasons cannot be taken with the Precision of Algebraic Quantities, yet when each is thus considered separately and comparatively, and the whole lies before me, I think I can judge better, and am less likely to take a rash Step..."

[Benjamin Franklin](#)
([September 19, 1772 letter to Joseph Priestley](#))

2. Mission Statement

"Promoting informed citizenship by presenting controversial issues in a simple, nonpartisan pro-con format."

3. History

In 1984, Steven C. Markoff, Chairman and CEO of A-Mark Financial,

and Maury Weiner, former chief deputy to then Los Angeles mayor, Tom Bradley, were discussing how difficult and time consuming it was to understand important public issues.

Specifically, separating rhetoric and opinion from facts and informed views can take hundreds of hours of research and is, therefore, practically impossible for the average citizen. Although it is the job of the media (newspapers, periodicals, television, radio, cable news programs and the internet) to define issues and present all sides, these are "for profit" organizations with a need to push their own agenda, which often conflicts with comprehensive and fair reporting.

Additionally, many of those in the news production business don't have the time, resources or inclination to adequately explore all sides of an issue and hit an editorial deadline.

On October 11, 1985 Maury and Steven incorporated a 501(c)(3) organization called the Association of Media Accuracy (AMA). The Association worked hard to find and present the best pro and con arguments to complex topics of national and international importance.

On May 16, 1990 the AMA was officially renamed the Pro/Con Foundation.

Mr. Markoff, Mr. Weiner, and their staff researched and issued two reports, printed in booklet form, at a cost of about \$75,000 each. The reports were entitled:

- *"Should Chief Justice Rose Bird Be Re-Confirmed In The Upcoming November 4, 1986 California Election?,"* issued in September of 1986, and
- *"How Practical Is Nuclear Power Now and For Our Future?,"* issued in May of 1988

True to the original objective, neither of these publications drew any conclusions, encouraging readers to make their own decisions based on the best pro and con statements presented.

The reception for both of these publications was enthusiastic, but because of the cost involved in research and distribution, the organization was discontinued in 1992 and its publications ended.

In 1996 the controversy over the use of medical marijuana was brought to Mr. Markoff's attention. He began asking questions about facts and issues in the debate and found that although many people had strong, if not emotional, views on the subject of medical marijuana, few seemed to have sound information on which to base their views or feelings.

Mr. Markoff then began his own research on some medical marijuana issues and published four informational booklets between May 1997 and August 1998 entitled:

- *"State-by-State Marijuana Laws"*
- *"Addictiveness of Marijuana vs. Five Commonly Used Drugs"*
- *"Some Of The Drugs America Takes"*

- *"Marijuana's Contribution To Preventable Deaths In The U.S. In 1990"*

In April 2002 Mr. Markoff launched MarijuanaInfo.org -- a website that set out the pros and cons in the medical marijuana debate in order to help all interested parties make their own more informed decisions.

Later in 2002 Mr. Markoff added pro-con websites on additional topics, and on May 1, 2002 the websites were formally taken over by The A-Mark Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit private foundation formed and funded in 1997 by Mr. and Mrs. Markoff.

On August 1, 2004, the ProCon websites were taken over by a new 501(c)(3) public benefit corporation, ProCon.org. As a 501(c)(3) corporation, ProCon.org works for the American public's benefit and is separate and independent from government.

Since American citizens and non-citizen residents help to fund all non-profit organizations through their taxes, ProCon.org considers itself an American company that is essentially owned by the American public. We exist to serve the public's interest.

4. Annual Reports

Our annual reports -- including an introduction from our Chairman, financial information, and ProCon.org's accomplishments:

- A. [Calendar 2006](#)
- B. [Calendar 2005](#)
- C. [Calendar 2004](#)

5. Board of Directors

The biography of each Board member listed below (in alphabetical order by last name) can be viewed by clicking on his/her name.

A. [John Kurtz, J.D.](#)
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B. [Jadwiga Markoff, M.D., Ph.D.](#)
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D. [Stanley F. Shimohara, C.P.A., M.B.A., J.D.](#)
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6. Management & Staff

The biography of each ProCon.org researcher and the Managing Editor (presented below in alphabetical order by last name) can be viewed by clicking on his/her name.

A. [Kambiz Akhavan](#), Managing Editor

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7. Funding

In 1997, [Mr. Steven C. Markoff](#) and [Mrs. Jadwiga Markoff](#) incorporated the A-Mark Foundation as a 501(c)(3) non-profit private foundation. They funded the Foundation with an initial donation of \$459,978 (proceeds from the sale of listed shares donated to the Foundation), and they made subsequent substantial donations.



On May 1, 2002, the A-Mark Foundation took over the pro-con websites of the Pro/Con Funadation and began funding them. On August 1, 2004, the A-Mark Foundation websites were transferred to ProCon.org, a newly formed 501(c)(3) non-profit. [[Click here](#) to see ProCon.org's Articles of Incorporation in PDF format]

Since this transition ProCon.org continues to be mainly funded by the A-Mark Foundation. [as of Dec. 28, 2006]

ProCon.org has not sought, nor has it received, any government funding.

Read more about ProCon.org's [financial information](#) for 2004, 2005, and 2006.

8. Donations

ProCon.org is designated [a California non-profit charitable corporation](#)  (PDF 1.34MB) and [a non-profit 501\(C\)\(3\) charitable organization](#)  (PDF 143KB) by the IRS. We appreciate your contributions to our efforts.

If you have found any of ProCon.org's sites useful, or agree with [our mission](#), **please send a donation today** to:

ProCon.org
233 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 200
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Funds are used primarily to continue our research programs and maintain our websites. For more details on how we spend the money we raise, please visit our [Financial Information](#) section.

9. Privacy Statement

1. ProCon.org is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Any information we collect through this web site is solely for our own use in managing and improving our service.
2. When readers offer feedback on our sites we will sometimes post their comments online. To preserve confidentiality, only the writer's first name is usually noted, unless they specifically ask us not to include their first name, or authorize us to use their full name. Respondents are generally notified when we add their response to the Reader Comments sections.
3. Private information about our users, including names, email addresses, contact information, donation amounts, and other personal data is NOT shared, marketed, sold, or otherwise distributed to any outside party or parties, including the government. Unless we are subpoenaed to do otherwise, our customer's private information shall remain private.
4. ProCon.org sometimes has links to other sites. Their privacy policies may differ from ours and we therefore can take no responsibility for them.
5. We collect data about traffic on our sites, including but not limited to the number and type of pages viewed. This information is used to improve our sites and aggregate totals some of which are posted on our sites.
6. If we decide to change this privacy policy, those changes will be reflected in this Privacy Statement.
7. We welcome your suggestions or comments about our Privacy Policy. Please send your comments to our [Managing Editor](#).

10. Disclaimer

ProCon.org content is offered as a public benefit in accordance with our 501(c)(3) status. All of our information can be viewed free of charge, and reprinting is allowed under the guidelines outlined in our [Terms of Use](#) policy.

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