

About Us



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1. Who We Are

ProCon.org is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit public charity 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 education and informed citizenship by presenting controversial issues in a simple, nonpartisan pro-con format."

3. History of ProCon.org (as told by our Founder)

"The idea for ProCon.org began in 1984 when I was having discussions with a friend, Maury Weiner, former chief deputy to then Los Angeles mayor, Tom Bradley.

Our discussions were about how difficult and time consuming it was to try to understand important public issues.

We discussed how separating rhetoric and opinion from facts and informed views seemed to take hours and hours of research and was, therefore, practically impossible for the average citizen to do.

Although it was the job of the media (newspapers, periodicals, television, radio, and cable news programs - the Internet had not arrived yet) to define issues and present different sides, the media are often "for profit" organizations, and they often seemed to have their own agendas, which not infrequently conflicted with comprehensive and fair reporting.

Additionally, many of those in the news production business don't have the time or resources to adequately explore various sides of an issue, in their need to hit editorial deadlines.

The first ProCon issue grew from my embarrassment in 1985 when I was sitting next to Rose Bird, the Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court at a celebrity fundraising dinner in Los Angeles.

After I had been invited to sit next to the Chief Justice, and knowing nothing about her at the time, I asked my office researcher to put together a one-page summary on her views of various topics so I would be somewhat knowledgeable at the dinner and so I could carry on a decent conversation with her. During that dinner I casually mentioned to the Chief Justice that I noted she was against capital punishment (something I had read in my researcher's one-page summary).

The Chief Justice reacted strongly and told me that wasn't true, but that was how she was portrayed in the media. She went on to tell me that she personally didn't like capital punishment, but that it was the law which she was sworn to carry out. She emphasized that before she would vote to affirm a capital verdict, she wanted to make darn sure that each death penalty punishment verdict was the result of a full and fair trial. Embarrassed at being wrong on such a public issue with Chief Justice Bird, particularly because I was usually pretty careful about what I said, and surprised to boot because my researcher at the time, who went on to earn her Ph.D., seldom made such mistakes, I decided to check out the issue of the Chief Justice and the death penalty.

In the days following that dinner I began asking questions about Rose Bird's view on the death penalty to find out if she was just doing her job of insuring that people convicted of capital crimes were fairly convicted, or if she was secretly thwarting the death penalty by finding tricky or improper ways to overturn capital punishment verdicts.

It seemed the more people I asked about the Chief Justice's views on the death penalty and other issues, the more confused I became, because even people that I thought were well educated and knowledgeable politically had strong conflicting views of her. Worse, it seemed that the more impassioned people were pro or con Rose Bird, the less it seemed they knew about her actual positions.

Being a bit stubborn and frustrated at the non answers I was finding, I started making notes of the pros and cons I learned. With many pages of comments that seemed to often contradict each other, Maury Weiner and I decided we would formalize the hunt for the truth of what Chief Justice Rose Bird believed on the death penalty and other issues. So, on October 11, 1985 we founded a 501(c)(3) organization called the Association of Media Accuracy (AMA), and 9 months of research later, we published our findings on Ms. Bird's views in a 73-page booklet of pros and cons entitled [*Should Chief Justice Rose Bird Be Re-Confirmed in the Upcoming November 4, 1986 California Election?*](#)

Maury and I then repeated the investigative process on a second topic and in May 1988 published an 89-page booklet titled [*How Practical Is Nuclear Power Now and for Our Future?*](#)

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

While people seemed to appreciate our efforts, given the energy and resources it took to do the research and sort out the conflicting views on the two topics, we went back to our busy lives and put Procon to bed for a few years.

In 1994, while the Internet was emerging, the controversy over the use of medical marijuana came to my attention. I again began asking questions about facts and issues in the debate and found (sadly again) that although many people had strong, if not emotional, views on the topic, few seemed to have sound information on which they based their views or feelings.

I then began my own research (Maury was busy full time in his administrative job at the Tarzana Treatment Center as well as his volunteer efforts at Amnesty International and the AARP National Affairs Council) 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, Jeff Yablan and I launched MarijuanaInfo.org -- a website that set out the pros and cons in the medical marijuana debate, in effect a forum to help educate anyone interested in the medical marijuana issue.

Later in 2002 the organization hired two more researchers, and we added pro-con websites on the topics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the ACLU. 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 primarily by my wife and me) in 1997.

On August 1, 2004, the ProCon websites were moved to a new 501 (c)(3) public charity, ProCon.org.

When we hired Kamy Akhavan as our first managing editor on December 7, 2004, we were off and running as a supplier of unbiased information on controversial topics."

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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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, the IT Manager, and the Mana (presented below in alphabetical order by last name) can be viewed by clicking name.

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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 Foundation 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 991KB) 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 make a donation today.**



(Click on this button to make a credit card donation via secure SSL connection )

Donations by check, money order, matching gift, etc., can be made via our [Donate](#) page.

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

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