

M4ML Executive Summary

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The Movement for Marijuana Legalization, M4ML, is a non-profit, political action committee based in Atlanta, Georgia.

Preface

Public approval for marijuana legalization has increased at an exponential rate over the last 10 years. Currently, 18 states and D.C. have legalized medical marijuana and Washington and Colorado have legalized marijuana. The regions of our country with permissive marijuana laws have carried the movement as far as it can go without changing Federal policy. When marijuana policy reform is proposed, the Federal government has been resistant all suggestions. *When it provides reason for its prohibitive stance, explanations are vague, unorganized, and incomplete at best.* The only consistency with the Fed's message is that Americans do not want marijuana. Poll statistics show the contrary. M4ML believes that our Federal Government uses the legalization movement's ineffectiveness in the South to justify making these statistically fallacious statements.

While much of the South is more conservative than other regions of the U.S., Atlanta's constituency, like those of most large cities, is more socially and economically progressive than other parts of the South. Atlanta's population is a diverse blend of native Atlantans and even more "transplants" that have relocated from all over the U.S. Despite a progressive and educated population, the reform movement continues to struggle in this region. This is due to the simple fact that Atlanta is still a southern city. The culture in the South is different from the more liberal West Coast and Northeast as demonstrated by its constituency's voting habits. Republican or Democrat, Southerners are conservative. Consequently, legalization messages that succeed in other regions fail to even arouse curiosity of Southerner's or our "good old boy" legislators. Additionally, most southern states do not have provisions in their constitutions that allow for petitions to create ballot initiatives. In Georgia, only

state legislators can introduce bills to the general assembly. Georgia's elected officials are not going to discuss marijuana policy reform without coaxing. By mobilizing pro-legalization voters and traditional lobbying, M4ML will force these officials to have a fact-based discussion on marijuana policy reform.

Atlanta's population of 4.2M represents over 40% of Georgia's 9.8M people. This figure proves that Atlanta has the voting power to dictate Georgia policy. Once the marijuana debate begins in Atlanta, the Federal Government will have to reevaluate its marijuana policy.

Objective

M4ML will tailor the marijuana legalization message specifically to speak to Southerners. We are framing a message to which Southerners will listen. This message will appeal to the conservative Christian voter. Instead of focusing on compassion, equal rights, and comparisons to alcohol or tobacco, we will emphasize economic growth, job creation, capitalism, states' rights, reducing government spending, and curbing funds flowing to *foreign* drug cartels and *inner city* gangs. The subtext of our message speaks to the core values of the South.

The Georgia State Lottery case study provides an excellent model for M4ML to follow. Gambling was illegal in Georgia for decades. Opponents cited social decay and crime as reasons for opposition. Eventually the state had a fact-based discussion weighing the pros and cons of a state lottery. After investigating other states that had lotteries and used the revenue for bettering the state, Georgia legalized the lottery. The result was the creation of the HOPE Scholarship which caused Georgia's University System's national ranking to soar. The state lottery made Georgia a better place. Marijuana will yield far greater benefits.

Upon delivery of this appropriate message which follows a proven model for success that provides tangible benefits, most Atlantans will welcome a conversation about marijuana policy reform.

M4ML key points are:

- Job Creation
- Increasing revenues w/o raising taxes
- Fortification of social programs – education, Medicare, social security, roads, healthcare

- Decrease government spending
- Reduce prison overcrowding w/o building new prisons – introduce argument against jobs lost by prison guards
- Diversion of money from criminal organizations to licensed businesses
- Regulation and control of marijuana industry and product like alcohol – decrease underage possession.
- Environmental Conservation – Hemp fiber can replace cutting trees for wood
- We will explore reasons explaining the fed's stance against policy reform and demonstrate that current policies are in place only because of corrupt special interests, racism, and misinformation.

Effectively delivering our message to Georgians will mobilize voters and increase working capital from the Southern and out-of-state advocacy groups. Armed with credibility, capital, and organized support, we will get marijuana legislation introduced in the Georgia State Legislature. Undoubtedly, Governor Nathan Deal will veto the bill; however, the significance of this progress will spark the interest of media outlets. In addition to CNN's Headquarters, Atlanta is one of the largest media hubs in the country. By attracting media attention, celebrity endorsements and public buzz, M4ML's message becomes louder and more powerful.

Summary

It is not a matter of if marijuana becomes legal, but when. The national legalization movement is stalled by Federal policy. In order for this policy to change, the states must all tell our government to change it. As long as the South is not pressuring the Fed, it will not act. Atlanta's social and economic climate is right. Atlanta is ready to have a conversation about marijuana legalization; it just needs the right message. Our organization's objective is to deliver a message that Atlanta voters will understand and accept. This will force our elected officials to listen. Our goal is to affect the 2014 mid-term elections.