

Report shows more arrests for cannabis than violent crime

by: Darryl W. Perry

A recent report from the ACLU and Human Rights Watch revealed some interesting facts about the 45 year old War on Drugs. It may not come as a surprise to some to read that over 1 million people are arrested each year in the drug war. The surprise come in the comparisons. The report states, "Every 25 seconds in the United States, someone is arrested for the simple act of possessing drugs for their personal use... [Accounting for m]ore than one of every nine arrests by state law enforcement."

Of the 1.25 million people arrested in 2015 in the War on Drugs, more than 574,000 were for cannabis. These arrests are often easier for police to obtain than for other offenses, especially if police target certain neighborhoods. By comparison in 2015 "there were 505,681 arrests for violent crimes (which the FBI defines as murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery,

and aggravated assault)."

That means police made almost 14 percent more arrests for cannabis possession than for all violent crimes combined, with approximately one arrest for cannabis possession every 55 seconds, accounting for or over \$1,000 spent every minute just on enforcing prohibition of a plant, or over \$524 million per year.

The report adds, "despite officials' claims that drug laws are meant to curb drug sales, four times as many people are arrested for possessing drugs as are arrested for selling them." And, "on any given day at least 137,000 men and women are behind bars in the United States for drug possession, some 48,000 of them in state prisons and 89,000 in jails, most of the latter in pretrial detention."

The report concludes with a recommend-

-ation for the complete removal of criminal sanctions for use and possession of drugs for personal use at both the federal and state levels. A footnote adds, "decriminalization would still leave room for civil and administrative sanctions such as monetary fines. There are strong arguments in favor of depenalization as well." Depenalization would remove all civil penalties as well, thus being better from the standpoint of human freedom than decriminalization. This is also the approach

I believe should be taken with all substances. To end the horrors described in the 196 page report titled "Every 25 Seconds: The Human Toll of Criminalizing Drug Use in the United States", the Drug War must end. To do that, the Controlled Substances Act and all other federal, state and local laws prohibiting the manufacture, sale, purchase, possession and consumption of all substances must be repealed.

Ballot selfie ban violates free speech rights

by: Darryl W. Perry

A growing trend across the country at the state level is passage of laws prohibiting so-called ballot selfies, which is "taking a digital image or photograph of [a] marked ballot and distributing or sharing the image via social media or by any other means." The justification for these prohibitions is that it prevents vote buying and preserves the right to a secret ballot.

A prohibition on ballot selfies was adopted in New Hampshire in 2014 and almost immediately challenged. ArsTechnica reports, "State lawmakers, when approving the law that carries a \$1,000 fine, had maintained in 2014 that the statute was needed to combat voter fraud—like having people coerced into voting a certain way."

The 1st US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in September, "Digital photography, the internet, and social media are not unknown quantities — they have been ubiquitous for several election cycles, without being shown to have the effect of furthering vote buying or voter intimidation. As the plaintiffs note, 'small cameras' and digital photography 'have been in use for at least 15 years,' and New Hampshire cannot identify a single complaint of vote buying or intimidation related to a voter's publishing a photograph of a marked ballot during that period." Adding, "Secretary [of

State William] Gardner has admitted that New Hampshire has not received any complaints of vote buying or voter intimidation since at least 1976, nor has he pointed to any such incidents since the nineteenth century." (emphasis added)

That's one argument debunked. Next is the claim that prohibiting anyone from posting a photo of their ballot somehow protects the right of the voter to cast a secret ballot. The Court wrote, the law "controls the use of imagery of marked ballots, regardless of where, when, and how that imagery is publicized," adding, "the prohibition on ballot selfies reaches and curtails the

speech rights of all voters, not just those motivated to cast a particular vote for illegal reasons." In other words, just because you have a right to a secret ballot, does not mean you are obligated to keep your ballot secret.

Efforts to repeal a similar law in Colorado failed earlier this year, and now that law is being challenged as well. One can hope that legislative bodies across the country will heed the words of the 1st Circuit Court of Appeals that the state "may not impose such a broad restriction on speech by banning ballot selfies in order to combat an unsubstantiated and hypothetical danger."



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Community Calendars

RECURRING EVENTS

KEENE

Every Sunday – Social Sunday: Local Burger, 82 Main St. – 6pm

First Sunday – Monthly Bitcoin Meet up: Local Burger, 82 Main St. – 5:30pm

LAKES REGION

Third Saturday – Lakes Region Porcupine Meeting: New Hong Kong Buffet 12 Old State Rd Unit 3, Belmont – 12-2pm

LEBANON

Last Tuesday of the month – Upper Valley Porcupines: Ziggy's Pizza, 254 North Plainfield Road, West Lebanon – 6-8pm

MANCHESTER

First Saturday of the month – Merrimack Valley Porcupines: – 11am (location varies, check ShireCalendar.FPP.cc)

Every Tuesday – Taproom Tuesday: Murphy's Taproom, 494 Elm St. – 5-7pm

Every Sunday – Shire Bitcoin Meetup: – 6-9pm (location varies, check ShireCalendar.FPP.cc)

NASHUA

Every Wednesday – Freedom Forum discussion: Barnes & Noble, 235 Daniel Webster Highway – 7-9pm

Every Sunday – Nashua Liberty Meetup: Martha's Exchange, 185 Main St. – 6-8pm

NEWMARKET

Last Sunday of every month – Freecoast Bitcoin Meet Up: Burrito Liberation, 170 Main St – 3-5pm

SEACOAST

Every Thursday – NH Seacoast Liberty Meetup: rotates weekly between Dover, Exeter, Hampton, Portsmouth & Rochester – 7pm (location varies, check ShireCalendar.FPP.cc)

Submit your events to editor@fpp.cc – please send event information by the final Sunday of each month.

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ObamaCare: things fall apart

by: Thomas L. Knapp

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, aka “ObamaCare,” was intended to dramatically increase the number of Americans with health coverage while “bending the cost curve” (that is, reducing the expected increases in price over time).

The plan managed the first goal, at least in the short term. Unsurprising, isn't it, that more people get coverage when the law requires them to buy it, penalizes those who won't, and subsidizes those who can't afford to?

But the progress on that metric is beginning to disintegrate and we're moving in the other direction. Bloomberg reports that 1.4 million Americans in 32 states will lose their health plans next year as major providers pull out of the ObamaCare “exchanges” because they're losing money. Apparently a business has to take in more than it spends if it wants to remain a going concern. I'm sure I've read that somewhere.

As far as “bending the cost curve” is concerned ... well ... according to the US Department of Health and Human Services, cited by US News & World Report, average premiums rose by 7.5% last year and will rise by 25% in 2017. Price inflation for most consumer goods over the 2015-2016 period averaged a little more than 1%. Forgive me for thinking that when costs increase at 7-25 times the rate of inflation, that's not really a lot of “bend” to the “curve.”

In 2009, I described (the then notional, yet to be passed into law) ObamaCare as “[g]overnment feeds you to the insurance companies, while simultaneously feeding the insurance companies to you. The state takes home a doggie bag.” Which is about the size of it, and I was far from the only person who noticed and warned that the plan not only wouldn't work, but COULDN'T work, if the goal was reducing costs and increasing access to health care. Artificially increasing demand relative to

supply can only have the opposite effects.

Since 2010, Republicans (who, by the way, first proposed the “individual mandate” scheme) have slowly but surely retreated from the idea of repealing ObamaCare and replacing it with nothing, instead proposing various schemes for keeping government as involved as possible in health care while pretending to “return” it to “the free market” (there hasn't been a free market in health care for more than a century, since the American Medical Association got licensing schemes imposed by the states so that it could limit the number of doctors and thereby keep their salaries high).

Most Americans are now worse off vis a vis health care than they were six years ago. The only winners have been government health bureaucrats. And unfortunately, the politicians don't seem to be interested in getting out of the way and letting the market fix things. Next stop: “Single payer.”

Thomas L. Knapp is director and senior news analyst at the William Lloyd Garrison Center for Libertarian Advocacy Journalism. He lives and works in north central Florida.

The Donald's 180 taxes

by: Darryl W. Perry

During the first Presidential debate at Hofstra University on September 26, Donald Trump uttered one simple sentence that has caused a lot of headlines ever since. The sentence “That makes me smart.” was in response to Hillary Clinton's statement “maybe he doesn't want the American people... to know that he's paid nothing in federal taxes, because the only years that anybody's ever seen were a couple of years when he had to turn them over to state authorities when he was trying to get a casino license, and they showed he didn't pay any federal income tax.”

Hillary later said, “it is probably true he hasn't paid a penny in federal taxes to actually support our military, or our vets, or our schools, or our roads, or our education system.” Hillary Clinton is hinting that without federal income taxes that schools and roads would cease to exist, and that no one would get an education. In actuality, only about 12% of funding for elementary and secondary education comes from the federal government, and road funding comes primarily from fuel taxes. The only thing Hillary is really upset about The Donald not funding are her precious wars. But I digress.

The real story here is not Hillary's response to Trump's proclamation of intelligence for not paying taxes, it's the 180 pulled by The Donald on not paying taxes. In 2011 Trump told Fox News, “Well, I don't mind sacrificing for the country to be honest with you. But you know, you do have a problem because half of the people don't pay any tax. [People] that are not contributing to this society. And it's a problem. But we have 50 percent. It just hit the 50 percent mark. Fifty percent of the people are paying no tax.”

In 2012, he made similar remarks and as recently as June 2015, again, told Fox News, “The problem we have right now—we have a society that sits back and says we don't have to do anything. Eventually, the 50 percent... and it's unfair to them... cannot carry the other 50 percent.”

I applaud anyone who finds a way to avoid having money stolen, even if that person is Donald Trump. However, in the case of Donald Trump, it is a bit hypocritical to claim it's smart to avoid federal income taxes while deriding other for not paying federal income taxes, and also profiting from other forms of theft, specifically eminent domain.

As a principled libertarian I seek a society without what Frederic Bastiat referred to as legal plunder; a society where nobody plunders anybody, because no one other than you has a legitimate claim to the fruits of your labor, and no one other than myself has a legitimate claim to the fruits of my labor.

Open Debate Demonstrations at NH1

by: Darryl W. Perry

On the evenings of October 26 & 27, NH1 held a pair of debates for the Gubernatorial & Senatorial candidates from the Republican & Democratic Parties. The Libertarian Party nominees for those offices as well as independent US Senate candidate Aaron Day were not invited to the debates. The Ballot Access Fairness Coalition in conjunction with the Libertarian Party of New Hampshire held a pair of protests outside the NH1 studios to protest these closed debates.

Despite ballot retention requiring 4% in the general election (i.e. the vote threshold needed for a party to retain ballot access without needing to collect a burdensome number of petitions), Libertarian Gubernatorial nominee Max Abramson polling between 4-6% and Libertarian US Senate nominee Brian Chabot polling at 4%, NH1 only invited candidates polling over 10%. In short, NH1 set the threshold at a level that only the Republican & Democratic Party nominees could meet.

The protests – including one on a cold rainy night – served to bring awareness, not only to the candidates excluded from these debates, but also to the media bias that often serves to protect the ruling duopoly.

editor's note: Independent US Senate candidate Aaron Day was also excluded from the NH1 debate. Robert Lombardo, the Libertarian Party nominee for US House in District 1, was also excluded from the NH1 hosted debate for that office as were Brenden Kelly & Shawn O'Copnorr. John Babiarez was excluded from the District 2 US House debate. However the only protests were before the Governor & US Senate debates.



Dakota Access versus the American Way

by: Thomas L. Knapp

CNN reports that protesters from around the world continue to congregate in North Dakota in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux and their struggle to stop construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline through (or placed so as to negatively affect) tribal lands.

The issues and the divide between sides seem to be fairly conventional: Promises of jobs and economic growth motivate the pipeline's supporters. Its opponents cite environmental concerns (especially the prospective damage to tribal lands) and allege violations of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 in Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners' wheedling of land use permissions out of federal and state governments.

On balance, the opponents seem to have a good case; the supporters not much of a case at all.

For more than a century and a half the US government has selectively ignored its treaties with the Standing Rock Sioux and other tribes whenever those treaties threaten to stymie the plans of corporations with friends in government. Successfully holding Washington to its word this time might give the politicians and their cronies pause next time.

And even if letting the US government use treaties as toilet paper just because it can

wasn't an incredibly corrosive idea, keep in mind that it's not just the Sioux who are getting mugged. Private land owners all along the pipeline's 1,100 mile route are feeling the pain, too. Like Keystone XL before it, ETP leverages government's power of "eminent domain" — under the pretense that the pipeline is some kind of public service rather than the private for-profit enterprise it actually is — to steal much of the land required to complete Dakota Access.

The go-to excuse among proponents of these "public/private partnership" type land thefts is always "jobs and economic development," but even if that excuse flew (it doesn't), it's a pretty poor one in this case. The \$3.7 billion pipeline is advertised as creating a whopping 40 permanent jobs. I'm not sure how many people work at the average Wal-Mart, but it looks like more than 40 to me. How many jobs in agriculture and other sectors would Dakota Access destroy along the way? We have no way of knowing.

For me, the bottom line is this: If the only way to do something you want to do involves stealing other people's stuff, you shouldn't do it. And you certainly shouldn't get government help to do it. Dakota Access is the opposite of the American way.

Thomas L. Knapp is director and senior news analyst at the William Lloyd Garrison Center for Libertarian Advocacy Journalism. He lives and works in north central Florida.



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Rethinking Columbus Day

by: Darryl W. Perry

In fourteen hundred and ninety-two Columbus sailed the ocean blue and found a land inhabited by other people. Christopher Columbus believed he had visited Asia, and it was Amerigo Vespucci who finally proved that the lands visited — not discovered — by Columbus were in fact a landmass previously unknown to most Europeans. I say most Europeans because the Vikings had visited the northern part of the Americas almost 500 years before the voyage of Columbus.

Despite not realizing the land was not Asia and not actually discovering anything, the "first Columbus Day celebration took place in 1792, when New York's Columbian Order—better known as Tammany Hall—held an event to commemorate the historic

landing's 300th anniversary." History.com adds, "In 1892, President Benjamin Harrison issued a proclamation encouraging Americans to mark the 400th anniversary of Columbus' voyage with patriotic festivities, writing, 'On that day let the people, so far as possible, cease from toil and devote themselves to such exercises as may best express honor to the discoverer and their appreciation of the great achievements of the four completed centuries of American life.'

In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed Columbus Day a national holiday, largely as a result of intense lobbying by the Knights of Columbus."

Despite being a federal holiday, Alaska, Hawai'i & Oregon have never officially

recognized Columbus Day as a state holiday, and in recent years the trend has gone away from celebrating Columbus to focusing on the people Columbus encountered. UPI reports, on October 5, the "Phoenix City Council unanimously approved the request [to officially declare the second Monday in October... Indigenous Peoples' Day] which aims to celebrate Phoenix's indigenous community." On the same day, the "Cincinnati City Council rejected the idea... with five of the city's nine council members abstaining from the vote."

The State of Vermont, however, is on the list of places celebrating Indigenous People's Day instead of, or in addition to, Columbus Day. That list also includes Seattle, Minneapolis, Denver and over 20 other

cities across the country.

Some people may argue that changing the holiday, that is mostly good for promotional sales and possibly a paid day off, is trying to remove or rewrite history. I take a different approach, in that I think holidays, for the most part, are excuses to get drunk and buy things at a discount. After a certain amount of time, holiday traditions change and people forget the original reason for the holiday. Also, any holiday designed to celebrate another human being will eventually cause people to question the details of that person's life. In the case of Columbus, we know he did not actually discover anything, and he violated the rights of the people he encountered. If you must have a holiday on the second Monday of October, a holiday remembering the people whose lives were altered by Columbus is something worth thinking about.



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