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## Learning from History: The Pitfalls of Prohibition Then and Now

2 messages

**Libertarian Party** <info@mail.lp.org>  
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Mon, Jan 29, 2024 at 4:39 AM

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### Learning from History: The Pitfalls of Prohibition Then and Now

As we reflect on January 29th, 1919, a pivotal moment in history occurred that would teach us a lesson we seem determined to forget – the ratification of the 18th Amendment, ushering in the era of Prohibition. A mere 14 years later, the United States Government admitted its mistake, repealing the amendment and putting an end to a failed experiment that birthed violence, black markets, and tragedy. Now, over a century later, we find ourselves grappling with a similar narrative in the form of the federal government's war on drugs, particularly the prohibition of cannabis products. The Libertarian Party urges a departure from the mistakes of the past, advocating for an end to the criminalization of substances. By examining Portugal's transformative 2001 drug decriminalization law as a model, we can build a compelling case for redirecting our approach toward addiction, treatment, and individual liberty.

Prohibition, born out of good intentions, quickly unraveled into chaos. The 18th Amendment may have aimed to curb alcohol-related issues, but it birthed a massive black market, escalating violent confrontations between bootleggers and authorities. Thousands lost their lives due to the consumption of improperly made alcohol, highlighting the unintended consequences of government overreach.

Fast forward to today, and we witness history repeating itself with the federal government's continued war on drugs, specifically the prohibition of cannabis products. While states are pushing back, legalizing cannabis in various forms, a glaring states-versus-feds issue persists. The question arises: Have we not learned from the pitfalls of the past?

## The Libertarian Call for Decriminalization

Libertarians assert that the government should cease its criminalization of substances, opting instead for a model that prioritizes individual freedom, responsibility, and treatment for addiction. Portugal's 2001 law, which decriminalized the possession and use of drugs, serves as a compelling model for this argument. By shifting the focus from punishment to treatment, Portugal achieved remarkable success in reducing drug-related harms.

Under the Portuguese model, those found with small amounts of drugs for personal use are not criminally prosecuted. Instead, they are referred to local "Commissions for the Dissuasion of Drug Addiction," composed of legal, medical, and social work professionals. The result? A significant decrease in drug-related deaths, HIV infections, and problematic drug use.

Libertarians advocate for a similar approach in the United States. By decriminalizing its use and opening pathways for addicts to seek treatment without the fear of legal repercussions, we can dismantle the black market, reduce violent confrontations, and allow individuals the autonomy to make choices about their own bodies.

As we commemorate the anniversary of Prohibition, let's reflect on the lessons of history. The Libertarian Party stands firm in its call for an end to the war on drugs, using Portugal's success as a guide toward a more compassionate, effective, and liberty-focused approach. It's time to break the chains of prohibition, learn from our past, and forge a future where individual freedom and responsible choices prevail. Join the Libertarian Party in standing against this tyrannical position and donate today to help us continue fighting the powers entangled in our Federal government.

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