

# Don't be **N.A.I.V.E** about **Amendment 3**

## Christian ethicist Alan Branch: 'Why we should vote NO on legalizing marijuana in Missouri'

By **J. Alan Branch**, author and professor of Christian Ethics at *Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.*

Legalizing recreational marijuana is bad public policy for Missouri. On November 8, Missouri voters will be asked to amend the state's constitution to remove bans on the sale, consumption and growing of marijuana. Doing so would make Missouri the 20th state to legalize recreational cannabis, but Missourians should think carefully and buck the national trend. The acrostic **N.A.I.V.E.** can help us understand why legalizing recreational pot is a bad idea for the Show Me State.

**Negative Effects on the Brain.** Marijuana has very detrimental effects on the brains of young people, and much of the damage is not reversible. A study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association Psychiatry* from June, 2021, concluded "cannabis use during adolescence is associated with altered neurodevelopment" in areas of the brain undergoing the greatest age-related change in middle to late adolescence. Even though the proposed amendment in Missouri sets 21 as the legal age for cannabis use, legalizing it throughout the state guarantees more pot will find its way into the hands of more teenagers, and more bright young minds will be damaged.

**Addiction is Possible.** While marijuana is not addictive in



the same way that cocaine or heroin are addictive, that does not mean that there is no risk of addiction with marijuana. According to 2014 article in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, approximately 9% of those who experiment with marijuana will become addicted, but the risk for addiction is much higher for those who start using pot during adolescence, with 1 in 6 teenagers who use pot eventually becoming addicted.

**Intoxication is Dangerous for Missouri.** The legalization of marijuana will mean more Missourians will be driving while they are high, and this means greater danger on our highways and jobsites.

**Vast Increase in Marijuana's Potency.** The marijuana today has four to five times as much THC, the chemical that makes people high, as earlier generations of pot. That means the cannabis being sold today is much stronger and more dangerous than what was grown 50 years ago. Higher levels of THC mean more negative consequences for Missourians.

**Evil Behavior.** The myth that smoking pot makes people friendlier and more mellow should be exposed for the lie it is. For example, the use of marijuana is correlated with an increased likelihood of domestic violence. In 2018, researchers from Ohio University and the University of Tennessee reported that 59.5% of men in court-ordered batterer intervention programs had used marijuana in the previous year, a danger amplified when alcohol is also involved. It is unclear how the widespread use of high-potency cannabis will affect rates of violent crime and sexual assault in Missouri, but using any drug lowers inhibitions and creates more threatening circumstances for families, women and children.

Legalizing recreational marijuana is a bad idea for Missourians, especially our children and teenagers. Once the smokescreen of arguments about increased tax revenue and decreased incarceration are blown away, the cold reality is that legalized pot means damage to the next generation and danger to the entire state. ■



**"WHEREAS**, MARIJUANA HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNIZED AS THE GATEWAY DRUG LEADING TO STRONGER ILLEGAL DRUG USE AND ADDICTION, ... **RESOLVED**, THAT WE, THE MISSOURI BAPTIST CONVENTION, PROTECT THE PEOPLE OF OUR GREAT STATE FROM THE FUTURE LEGALIZATION OF RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA ...."

- FROM 2018 MBC RESOLUTION # 6, ON MARIJUANA BALLOT MEASURES

## Fast facts about Amendment 3

- A 'NO' vote for Amendment 3 on the 2022 Missouri ballot on Nov. 8, 2022, will continue to *prohibit* recreational marijuana.
- A 'YES' vote will *legalize* recreational marijuana, removing "state prohibitions on the purchase, possession, consumption, use, delivery, manufacture, and sale of marijuana for personal use for adults over the age of twenty-one."
- The amendment removes all restrictions regarding marijuana in family court; it prevents any elected official from interfering with the work of the Department of Health and Senior Services – directly or indirectly – in regard to the Department's obligations and activities under this section; and also an employer cannot fire or discipline someone for marijuana use.
- The 37-page amendment will weigh down the Missouri Constitution with additional regulations that, in the normal legislative process, would be addressed by the state legislature.
- Amendment 3 creates a health risk, since recreational marijuana greatly increases the risk of psychotic disorders in users of all ages.
- Amendment 3 allegedly introduces critical theory into the Missouri Constitution by creating the position of 'chief equity officer.' This officer is neither appointed by the Missouri Governor nor approved by the Missouri legislature.
- Amendment 3 will make the state government dependent on drug use and addiction for income. It proposes a 6 percent sales tax on recreational marijuana, but stipulates only that "various programs" will benefit – though it doesn't name or provide other information about those particular programs.
- In states where recreational marijuana has been legalized, there has been a massive increase in arrests for driving under the influence of controlled substances. This makes roadways more dangerous for drivers and pedestrians. ■

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MATT. 5:12-13

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