

What do President Reagan's Secretary of State George Schultz, former Fed Chairman Paul Volker, Former President Jimmy Carter, Former Detroit Police Chief McKinnon, and the 700 Club's Pat Robertson all have in common? Add to this list international media and political expert Fareed Zakaria, former Presidents and Prime Ministers of five countries in Europe and South American, and the United Nation's Global Commission on Drug Policy. They all agree that the 43 year old "War on Marijuana" has failed miserably. They call for the decriminalization of marijuana, an end to policies that rely on law enforcement, prosecution, criminal penalties, and incarceration for pot users and in its place new models of regulation, taxation, education, and treatment.

That the war on marijuana has failed is almost universally accepted. Beginning in 1937, and accelerated by Richard Nixon in 1970, the U.S. criminalization of marijuana has resulted in hundreds of thousands of persons arrested, prosecuted, and jailed, at a cost of many billions of dollars. For that money, we have seen the creation of huge underground economies that are neither taxed nor regulated, run often by drug cartels and street thugs. We have wasted precious resources on prisons, lawyers, and law enforcement that focus on drug use instead of true crime like burglaries, larceny, rape and murder.

Pot has been decriminalized in many places across the globe, including nations in Europe, South America, and in cities and states here in the US. The results show no increase in crime, addiction, or underage use. Everywhere medical marijuana issues are put on the ballot, voters pass them in overwhelming numbers. Yet some reactionary segments of society, particularly in law enforcement, continue to follow failed policies of prohibition.

In Ferndale voters voted for legalization of medical marijuana three times. Each time the percentage of voters saying yes increased; finally during the state referendum they went 3 to 1 in favor. As a Councilman, and then Mayor in Ferndale, I came out in support of these efforts. We spent over a year going over zoning rules, developing policies, drafting legal rules and planning for medical marijuana to come to Ferndale, following the dictates of our residents and the people of Michigan. We opened a dispensary with great fanfare, and it was toured by mayors, council members, and police officials from several neighboring cities. There were no problems, complaints or issues of any kind during the two months Clinical Relief was open, that is until the day the Sheriff and his strike force came to town with helicopters, bullet proof vests, automatic weapons, and dogs.

Focus on truly dangerous drugs like heroin, cocaine, and meth. Work to prevent abuse of legal drugs that are killing our young, like vicodin, codeine and oxycotin. Let police aim their resources at real crime like burglaries, larceny, drunk driving and violent crimes against people. Send a message to Pontiac, Lansing, and Washington that it is time to end the wasting of resources on marijuana prohibition. If Ann Arbor could do it 40 years ago, then surely Ferndale can do it in 2013.