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The Numbers
CANNABIS IN YOUR COMMUNITY
BY TIM JOHNSON

$3,133,805,671

$107,187,341
Total retail marijuana sales in Whatcom County (2014-2017). In May, the average price for an eighth of an ounce of high-quality marijuana in Bellingham was $35.

$56
Retail marijuana sales in Whatcom County, in millions (2017).

$32
Retail marijuana sales in Skagit County, in millions (2017).

$25,722,420
Total tax revenue from marijuana sales in Whatcom County (2014-2017). Marijuana tax revenues are exceeding initial estimates.

$9,646,861

25
Number of marijuana retailers in Whatcom County.

15
Number of marijuana retailers in Skagit County.

69
Number of marijuana growers and/or processors in Whatcom County.

32
Number of marijuana growers and/or processors in Skagit County.

7
Rank of Whatcom County in number of marijuana growers among Washington’s 39 counties.

5
Rank of Whatcom County in number of marijuana retailers among Washington’s 39 counties.

98

SOURCES: 502 Data, Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board (WSLCB), Drug Policy Alliance

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Some folks still want to make a federal case out of marijuana laws. Following reform efforts in Washington and Colorado, more than two dozen states and the District of Columbia have established laws broadly legalizing marijuana in some form. Eight states and the District of Columbia have adopted the most expansive laws legalizing marijuana for recreational use. Most recently, sales of recreational-use marijuana in California kicked off on Jan. 1. In Massachusetts, retail sales of cannabis are expected to start later this year in July. Voters in Maine similarly approved a ballot measure legalizing marijuana in 2016. Maine, however, has not yet adopted rules for licensed marijuana growers or retailers, nor has it begun accepting licenses.

The vast majority of states allow for limited use of medical marijuana under certain circumstances. But despite the rapid retrenchment of thought on pot, don't expect a national effort to end federal marijuana prohibition anytime soon. Oh, it's close. Tantalizingly close.

The Los Angeles Times Editorial Board suggested last month that Trump is the first White House occupant in history to suggest that he would support this level of national drug reform.

"It doesn't hurt that Trump is still mad at Sessions over the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election," the board wrote. "It would be ironic if Trump's irrational anger at the attorney general is what finally pushes the federal government to adopt a rational policy on marijuana."

Most optimism surrounding the possibility of ending marijuana prohibition stems from the recent introduction of a bill in the U.S. Senate called the STATES Act (Strengthening the Tenth Amendment Through Entrusting States). The proposal, introduced by Senators Cory Gardner of Colorado and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, is designed to eliminate the possibility of federal interference in states that have legalized the leaf in some fashion.

It's a different approach.

Most proposals to legalize marijuana seek to eliminate the cannabis plant from the DEA's Controlled Substances Act. The STATES Act doesn't bother. Under this proposal, cannabis would remain a Schedule I dangerous drug. States would simply be given the freedom to engage in the legal cannabis trade without the risk of federal raids and prosecutions.

If passed, it would essentially become a more permanent version of the now Rohrabacher-Blumenauer amendment, which has protected medical marijuana states from the interference of the Justice Department, on a temporary basis, for the past several years. With the STATES Act, the recreational marijuana sector would also find similar protection.

The STATES Act would do just what it says on the tin—make the case for marijuana one of states' rights for self-determination. And that makes sense, since the states are the beneficiaries of marijuana reform.

"Evidence shows that marijuana legalization is working so far," the national Drug Policy Alliance noted in their annual report. "States are saving money and protecting the public by comprehensively regulating marijuana for adult use. This success has likely contributed to the historically high levels of public support for marijuana legalization in the United States, which has steadily grown to an all-time high of 64 percent. The majority of Americans, across party affiliations, support legalizing marijuana, with 51 percent of Republicans now in favor," the report authors note.

Arrests and court filings for the possession, cultivation and distribution of marijuana have plummeted since voters legalized marijuana for adult use in those eight states and Washington, D.C. The states have also saved millions of dollars and prevented the criminalization of thousands of people. And the bugaboos about a "doped-up," pot-crazed society have not manifested: Marijuana use has remained...
stable or declined; among youths use has declined markedly.

Arrests for driving under the influence, of alcohol and other drugs, have declined in Colorado and Washington, the first two states to gather detailed year-on-year data about legally regulated adult use.

At the same time, states are filling their coffers with hundreds of millions of dollars in marijuana tax revenues. These revenues are being directed to social good—to fund education, school construction, early literacy, bullying prevention, behavioral health and alcohol and drug treatment. And the legal marijuana industry is creating jobs—it currently employs approximately 200,000 full- and part-time workers across the country.

But before the STATES Act, or any other marijuana measure can be signed by President Trump, it would first need to be met with Congressional approval—and that seems unlikely at this juncture, given the paralysis of the lower House of Representatives. And federal lawmakers in both chambers have been reluctant to come out in support of marijuana.

As it stands, the STATES Act has only nine cosponsors. That’s not exactly an impressive showing, especially considering some cannabis-related proposals have earned upward of 30 cosponsors, and have yet to receive any consideration.

But this inaction is not all a Republican mire. Democrats have also been resistant to support nationwide cannabis reform.

“This isn’t the first bill in Congress proposing to ease federal restrictions on marijuana,” the L.A. Times board admits. “It is, however, the first that has a chance of passing and the potential support of the president. It’s the most promising effort to date to do away with the contradiction between federal law and the laws passed in recent years by California and other states to move marijuana sales from the black market into a legal, regulated and taxed system. That would be an extraordinary step forward.”

The bottom line is it may still be too early to get excited about the possibility of marijuana legalization going nationwide. There is still plenty of opposition in Congress that likely will stall or prevent reform from happening anytime soon. Legal marijuana may simply have to flower untended at the national level, spreading its seeds across every state.

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**Thai Iced Tea**

**WITH HERBAL INFUSION**

FROM www.thecannabist.co

**INGREDIENTS:**

6 chai tea bags, or 6 black tea bags with ½ teaspoon of ground cinnamon, two cardamom pods, 1 star anise and ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

8 cups boiling water

¼ to ½ cup granulated sugar (optional)

1 can condensed milk (14 ounces)

3-5 tablespoons melted cannabutter

**DIRECTIONS**

Place the chai tea bags (or the black tea bags with the spices) in a pitcher. Pour 8 cups of boiling water over the tea bags. Allow to steep for 4-5 minutes. Remove the bags and add the optional sugar. Let cool to room temperature.

In a small bowl combine the condensed milk and melted cannabutter.

Fill six glasses with ice cubes. Fill each glass two-thirds of the way with the tea. Top the tea with about 2 ounces of the condensed milk mixture. It will sink to the bottom, and that’s good. Stir and drink.

Like many recipes using marijuana, this one was made with the help of cannabis-infused butter (cannabutter), one of the simplest and most common ways to make infused edibles. Since homemade edibles can be difficult to accurately dose, go to www.leafly.com to make sure you’re on the right track, or ask your favorite budtender for tips.

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While it’s true that marijuana is most likely going to be inhaled or ingested at Cannabis Members Club’s weekly 420 Happy Hour, the event that takes place every Friday at a private locale on Lake Whatcom is about much more than getting high—although the freedom to do so is a big part of why the club exists.

“We created this experience as a way to turn what would otherwise be a regular happy hour into a unique experience of learning, meeting like-minded friends, and of course eating and drinking delicious foods by the lake,” CMC Social Activist Director Darren Glenn says.

Glenn says the requirements to take part in the entertaining and educational event are pretty simple. You must be 21 or older, willing the join the club (membership is free), and BYOC (bring your own cannabis). For $30, you’ll be able to sample delicious appetizers, sip on premium beers or wine, listen to live music, and discuss the issues of the day with your fellow happy hour attendees.

“We believe as more states legalize cannabis, more people are realizing the benefits of it,” Glenn says. “But there are still many states that look at cannabis as an illegal drug. Cannabis Members Club will change the way some people view cannabis by educating them about the many uses of the plant.”

The local CMC chapter made its debut in April, but Glenn says the growing community of cannabis enthusiasts, medicinal users, activists and businesses dedicated to the safe use of marijuana has been around for two years, with additional chapters in California, Oregon, and Nevada.

The goal is to have a chapter in every state that has already legalized cannabis, and, regionally, to work on laws in Washington state to allow public cannabis clubs. (The first Cannabis Club rooms will open in Oregon and Los Angeles later this year.)

“Every day, the CMC fights back against politicians, judges and bureaucrats who want to regulate, restrict and ultimately destroy your freedom to smoke marijuana.”

—Darren Glenn, CMC activist

Glenn says that by joining the ranks, you’ll be helping work to legalize marijuana on a national level and take the plant off the federal list of controlled substances. Social activism is a big part of what the CMC does, and the 420 Happy Hour is a good place to get started.

“Membership is vital to the growth of the organization,” he says. “It’s the members and supporters that keep our organization prospering toward reaching the needs of cannabis users. Every day, the CMC fights back against politicians, judges and bureaucrats who want to regulate, restrict and ultimately destroy your freedom to smoke marijuana.”

Of course, once you’ve sussed out the meeting locale of the Bellingham-based 420 Happy Hour and are sitting by the shores of Lake Whatcom with a cold brew in one hand and a spliff in the other, you might be tempted to forget the need to call your senators and congress members to inform them you’re on board with national legalization. That’s OK, too, as long as you don’t lose sight of the bigger picture.

“As we grow, our mission is to provide our members and sponsors great reviews, information and awesome events that will bring together everyone with an interest in the cannabis/hemp world,” Glenn says.

“The biggest benefits are people coming together for the cause. We have a great location on Lake Whatcom, and each week is getting better.”

Cannabis Collective
LIGHT UP AT 420 HAPPY HOUR

BY AMY KEPFERLE

WHAT: 420 Happy Hour by the Lake
WHEN: 4:20-7:20pm every Friday
WHERE: Private locale on Lake Whatcom (revealed when you join the Cannabis Members Club and reserve a spot).
COST: $30; includes appetizers, beer and wine, and live music
MORE: Cannabis won’t be sold or offered on site, and you must be 21 or older to attend. Register the Wednesday before each Friday’s Happy Hour (only 60 tickets will be sold each week)
INFO: www.cannabismembersclub.com
The joint you’re puffing on as you settle in to read this article might be upping your carbon footprint.

According to Oberfelder Cannabis Farms, one percent of the nation’s power is currently being used to grow marijuana—enough to light up a city of two or three million homes.

“In terms of carbon, it’s equal to having three million cars on the road,” the Chelan-based farm writes on their website. “Smoking a single indoor-grown joint is like driving a car 44 miles or leaving a 100-watt light bulb on for 25 hours. It takes a lot of energy to replicate the sun.”

Barring tending a small crop in your backyard—something the Washington State Legislature has not yet approved, even though marijuana was legalized years ago—this means that if you want to go really green, you’ll need to head to your local weed store to procure product that was grown outdoors.

Problem is, some of those farmers harnessing the power of the sun might be found to be on the wrong side of the law. Even though cannabis can legally be farmed for consumption, it’s not classified by the state as an agricultural crop, and isn’t yet guaranteed the same protections.

It hasn’t yet happened in Whatcom County, but in Chelan County, lawmakers are acting on a legal loophole that says if someone can smell what you’re growing, you might be in violation of the Clean Air Act and fined accordingly.

A recent documentary produced by local filmmaker Bob Ridgley, Oberfelder’s Cannabis Farm: The Good, the Bad and the Happy, explores the legal issues surrounding the cultivation of marijuana—particularly strains grown outside.

But marijuana as a crop—and as an increasingly important product of the ag economy—has an unlikely champion in the person of Vincent Buys. The prim Republican from Lynden perceived early on that marijuana and hemp held potential as a new cash crop for struggling farms, and has spoken of his support for growers at town hall meetings.

“Regardless of how we feel about the end product, it should be considered agriculture,” Buys asserts.

Unfortunately, it isn’t. State law clearly states that pot is not an agricultural product. And that means the product is not included in right-to-farm legislation. The law bars neighbors from claiming dust, odors and noise from an existing farm’s lawful operations are a nuisance if they’re covered under the right to farm.

Outdoor marijuana farms in particular need protection from disgruntled neighbors, the advocates say. Buys has led the effort to provide that protection.

Washington voters legalized recreational pot in 2012, and production and sales are flourishing. The state has 1,128 licensed marijuana producers. Retail pot sales totaled $972.7 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016, according to the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board. Sales for this fiscal year already have topped $984 million.

Currently, however, Washington’s right-to-farm law specifically excludes marijuana. The House agriculture committee recently voted 11-4 to reverse that policy.

House Bill 1692’s prime sponsor, Rep. Buys, said the law shouldn’t discriminate against marijuana—any more than it does against beer-essential hops or wine-producing grapes.

If the bill passes, that will be welcome news for people like Jesse Straight and her brother, Kenny Ingebritson. As the cofounders of Eagle Trees Farm, the duo’s product is 100 percent sun- and green-house-grown, and uses beneficial insects instead of pesticides to keep problems at bay.

Located on 25 acres near the Nooksack River on the site of a former horse-breeding farm, the siblings say they grow their cannabis the way people want their food grown—100 percent natural and in tune with the environment.

“We consider the farm as part of the local living ecosystem and connected to the Nooksack River wilderness,” Straight says. “We see the salmon spawning in the river in the fall and marvel at the bald eagles who come to clean up the salmon in the early winter. We are committed to regenerative closed-loop farming practices. Our cannabis is grown under the sun, in our native living soil, the most important element of the farm.”

Eagle Trees strains are Clean Green certified, all have their own personalities, and are supplemented with compost and homebrewed tea made from worm castings instead of store-bought synthetic nutrients. They grow everything they sell, including the cannabinoids in their body balm.

When you purchase their product in stores from Bellingham to Everson, Anacortes, Vancouver, Everett, Deming, Custer, Burlington, Seattle and beyond, remember that you’re not only helping a family farm thrive, you’re also helping protect the environment. Hopefully, legal issues surrounding outdoor grow-ops will soon be a thing of the past, and you can inhale with a clear conscience, knowing you’re doing your part to go green.
Cannabis affects coordination behind the wheel.

It’s illegal to use cannabis while riding as a passenger.

Keep cannabis in original, unopened packaging.

Drive with cannabis out of reach—like in the trunk.

Mixing alcohol and cannabis can increase the risk of crashes.

When it comes to cannabis, safety is essential. Driving under the influence is illegal—and it’s also dangerous. Cannabis can impair judgment, alertness, and reaction time. And driving while under the influence could lead to harmful—possibly deadly—collisions. Which could mean significant legal penalties for you. By choosing a safer ride, you can keep yourself—and others on the road—out of harm’s way.

105 deadly crashes in 2016 involved a driver who tested positive for cannabis.

An increase from 91 fatal crashes in Washington state during the previous year.

For more on safe driving, visit KnowThisAboutCannabis.org

* Source information for statements can be found at KnowThisAboutCannabis.org/Sources