

Arizona to vote on recreational marijuana in upcoming election

Prop 207 aims to legalize the general use and sale of the drug in the state



Photo by Mickey Calata | The State Press

"This will be the second time Arizona will have voters decide on the legalization of marijuana with Prop 207 appearing on the general election ballot this November." Illustration published on Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020.

By Kevin Pirehpour | 10/04/2020 8:09pm

Britnie Roy, a medical marijuana cardholder and senior studying family and human development, started experiencing panic attacks in her sophomore year at ASU.

Roy detailed how doctors tried giving her anxiety medication to alleviate her symptoms, but it only made her experience nauseousness and other side effects, including making her "pass out."

At the start of the pandemic, Roy's anxiety heightened. Roy said she thought she was getting sick "every five seconds" at the time. She then contracted COVID-19.

One thing, however, has helped her manage the stress of school and the pandemic: marijuana.

While fighting COVID-19 over the summer, Roy would take small doses of edible marijuana to alleviate the flu-like symptoms she experienced.

Her experience with anxiety, the novel coronavirus and the yearly cost of renewing her medical card has contributed to her decision on voting for the upcoming proposition to legalize marijuana in Arizona.

In November, voters will decide on **Proposition 207**, which would legalize the sale and use of recreational marijuana and allow the state to tax and regulate the drug.

This marks the second time in Arizona's history a proposition to legalize recreational marijuana has made it to the ballot.

"I'm voting yes on the prop," Roy said. "I feel like it's good for anyone who's having anxiety, or mental health issues ... They'll feel better and calmer because anxiety is one of the worst feelings."

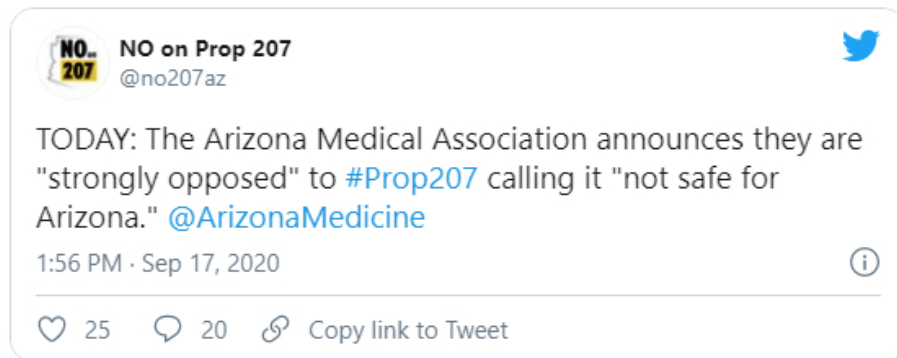
If the act passes, Arizona would join **11 other states** and Washington, D.C. in legalizing recreational marijuana use, allowing anyone 21 years old or older to purchase and cultivate the plant. Four other states are also voting on marijuana legislation in November.

Advocates of Prop 207, also referred to as the **Smart and Safe Arizona Act**, tout the estimated \$3 billion of revenue over 10

years recreational marijuana could bring the state to aid higher education, emergency services, public health initiatives and a pathway for record expungement.

However, opposition comes from public health and medical professionals, such as Dr. Ross Goldberg, the president of the [Arizona Medical Association](#), who says there isn't enough data to make an informed vote.

"There really isn't a ton of research that we have regarding long term use and the effects of marijuana," Goldberg said. "And that's part of our problem, we don't have the data."



Without knowing the full medical impact of marijuana, legislation on recreational use can be "damaging" and irreversible, Goldberg said.

Goldberg said a 21-year-old brain is still developing, and there isn't enough research to support a range of medical outcomes for students in their early 20s.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), studies have shown that marijuana affects parts of the brain responsible for functions like learning, emotions and decision making.

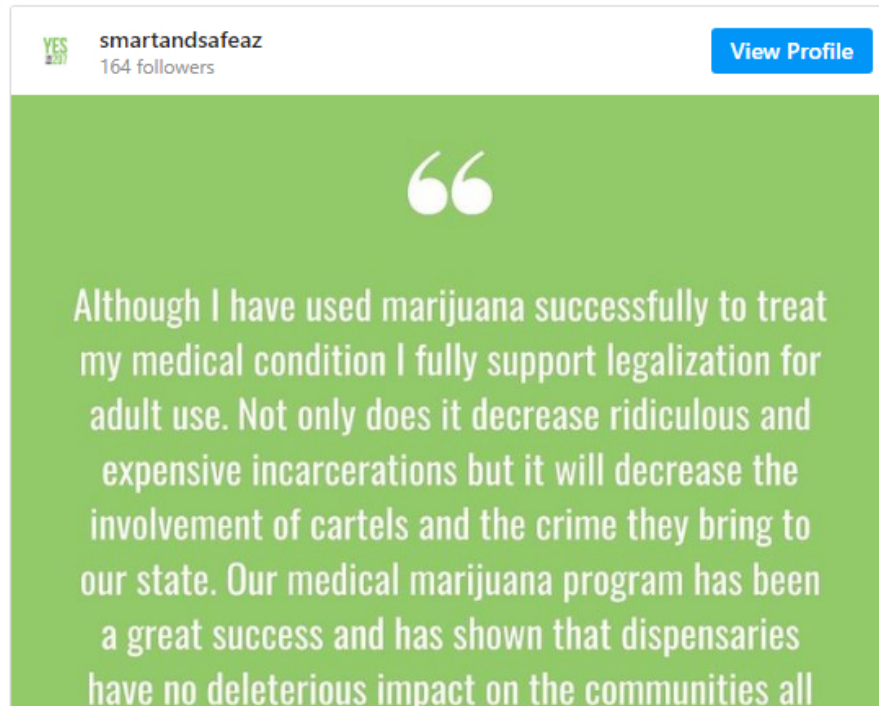
"As physicians, the ones who take care of everyone, our job is to not do harm," Goldberg said. "Us supporting something without the information is doing harm. We just can't do that."

Currently, marijuana is categorized as a "schedule I" drug — along with drugs like heroin and LSD — which means the United States Drug Enforcement Administration considers it to have "no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse."

Goldberg said the AMA is not opposed to reforming future marijuana legislation but does oppose the current effort to legalize recreational use as proposed on Prop 207.

"It would be like driving down a road without the lights on," Goldberg said. "What we're advocating for is more research."

Stacy Pearson, an advocate for Prop 207, said Arizona voters are informed and ready to legalize marijuana to end "cruel" marijuana criminal convictions.



the while adding significant money to the state.

- Medical Cannabis User and Arizona Voter

#SmartandSafeAZ #YesOn207

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By voting YES on Prop 207, you're agreeing that marijuana is safest when it's taxed, tested, and regulated. #SmartandSafeAZ #YesOn207

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Possessing less than 2 pounds of marijuana not for sale in Arizona can land someone a Class 6 felony, a punishment including six to 18 months in jail and up to \$150,000 in fines.

"It is a fact that communities of color are disproportionately arrested and convicted of low-level marijuana offenses," Pearson said. "It is long past time for that to end."

About one-third of the revenue generated from recreational marijuana would go to community colleges allowing them to expand programs, reduce tuition and hire more teachers for students transferring to a university, Pearson said.

However, regardless of how voters decide in November, ASU will remain a drug-free environment and prohibit students from possessing marijuana on campus, Julie Newberg, the director of communications for [Arizona Board of Regents](#), said in an email.

The current [University drug policy](#) prohibits the possession, distribution and use of federally illegal drugs on all ASU owned property. Students caught with marijuana may face suspension or expulsion and may be required to take a drug education or assessment program.

Maya Tatum, secretary of the board of directors for [Students for Sensible Drug Policy](#) and graduated from ASU in Spring 2020, said the University's marijuana policy creates obstacles for students who use marijuana for medicinal purposes on campus.

"If I had allergies or if I had chronic fatigue, I would be allowed to bring other prescription drugs on campus," Tatum said. "But I'm subsequently not allowed to have my cannabis on campus."

Tatum believes that people should ultimately be able to decide for themselves to use marijuana — including for recreational use — without the fear of being "harassed" by ASU police.

ASU police has cited 12 people for possession of marijuana in September 2020 alone, [according to crime logs](#) from the ASU police open data portal.

Tatum said history of how marijuana laws have impacted communities is an important part of the proposition. She said research shows the legalization of recreational marijuana is "not going to cause the world to go up in flames."

"When it comes to something like this (vote), you're talking about people's lives," Tatum said. "You're talking about the history of this drug and how it has disproportionately affected people."