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TOPICS: Addressing the Legality of Narcotic Drugs, The Effects of the Drug Trade on the Economy

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Addressing the Legality of Narcotic Drugs; Recent Updates

On Thursday, October 6, 2022, President Joe Biden pardoned everyone who had been convicted of marijuana possession under federal law. This pardon is considered the most extensive action on the U.S. drug policy taken by the White House. President Biden has also advised governors to follow his action for state offenses of marijuana possession. Currently, marijuana is considered a Schedule I narcotic, similar to Heroin and LSD, meaning it has no medical use and a high likelihood of abuse. Biden called upon the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Attorney General to review how marijuana is scheduled under federal law (I, II, IV).¹ Recently, Issue 4 failed to legalize recreational marijuana in Arkansas. While supporters of Issue 4 spent over \$13 million in their campaign, voters campaigning against Issue 4 spent a fraction of the cost the supporters did. Churches, business groups, political officials, and citizens vanquished the marijuana industry and corporations wanting to legalize marijuana in the fight to pass article 4.² Colorado is currently voting on Proposition 122 which would decriminalize the growing, sharing, and use of five psychedelic substances for ages 21 and older, these substances include dimethyltryptamine (DMT), ibogaine, mescaline (excluding peyote), psilocybin, and psilocin. As of November 17, 2022, 1,292,298 (53.6%) citizens have voted in favor of Proposition 122 and 1,119,563 (46.4%) citizens have voted against the proposition. Colorado has been ranked as a state with the lowest mental health rates, and are attempting to

¹ Daniels, Eugene, and Natalie Fertig. "Biden pardons marijuana offenses, calls for review of federal law." *Politico*, 6 October 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/10/06/biden-to-pardon-marijuana-offenses-call-for-review-of-federal-law-00060796>. Accessed 17 November 2022.

² Gilbert, Gary. "Recreational marijuana Issue 4 fails in Arkansas." *KNWA*, 8 November 2022, <https://www.nwahomepage.com/election/your-local-election/recreational-marijuana-issue-4-fails-in-arkansas/>. Accessed 17 November 2022.

make more options for mental health treatment and therapy.³ The FDA is actively monitoring narcotics status' to see which ones are suffering from current shortages. Lastly updated on November 16, the FDA reported over 160 current drug shortages, this shortage includes narcotics such as Atropine Sulfate Injection, Bacteriostatic 0.9% Sodium Chloride Injection, Amoxapine Tablets, and many more. The Drug Shortages Staff consistently updates this information and the FDA bases this data on information from all drug manufacturers. Drug shortages that have currently been resolved stay monitored to ensure a proper reintegration of supply.⁴

³ "Home." *YouTube*, <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/drugshortages/default.cfm>. Accessed 17 November 2022.

⁴ Law, Tara. "Colorado Voted to Decriminalize Psilocybin and Other Psychedelics." *Time*, 11 November 2022, <https://time.com/6232212/colorado-decriminalizes-psychedelics-psilocybin-proposition-122/>. Accessed 17 November 2022.

The Effects of the Drug Trade on the Economy; Recent Updates

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has just released its annual report registering a 43% increase in coca cultivation, and cocaine processing, in Columbia. This cocaine production is the highest number in history, at 1,400 metric tons. Columbia's cocaine exports have increased to 731 metric tons, according to police interdiction calculations. Ivan Duque, Colombia's former president, had plans to decrease the drug trade through his counternarcotics policy that focused on the extermination of coca⁵. The large concentration of drug trafficking in Columbia has led to major government corruption by undermining the foundations of the indigenous communities. This trafficking has increased the persecution of indigenous leaders and has co-opted the youngest members of these communities.⁶ In August 2022 three criminals were arrested because of their involvement in the BMPE scheme. Ran by the Sinaloa Drug Cartel, this scheme was responsible for kidnapping a United States citizen who was convicted of selling and distributing over 100 kilograms of cocaine. The victim who was kidnapped was held hostage at a ranch where they were discovered to be waterboarded, shocked, beaten, and shot. The hostage was released at a ransom of \$14,000, which the criminals were convicted of laundering. Drug trafficking groups have corrupted economies throughout the world, by laundering money and being involved in illegal schemes/ activities. As of mid-October 2022, seventeen people were convicted throughout Washington, Seattle, and California due to

⁵ Alsema, Adriaan. "Colombia's cocaine production soared to new record high in 2021." *Colombia Reports*, 21 October 2022, <https://colombiareports.com/colombias-cocaine-production-soared-to-new-record-high-in-2021/>. Accessed 17 November 2022.

⁶ VELASCO, MARCELA. "Drug trafficking in Colombia undermines the foundations of Indigenous autonomy." *IWGIA*, 2 May 2022, <https://www.iwgia.org/en/news/4756-drug-trafficking-in-colombia-undermines-the-foundations-of-indigenous-autonomy.html>. Accessed 17 November 2022.

involvement with cartel-connected drug trafficking schemes. This incident occurred due to connections with three different major drug trafficking groups, which were deemed responsible for trafficking over 1,000 pounds of methamphetamine and over 100,000 fentanyl pills. U.S. attorney, Nick Brown, stated that the three groups involved are facing federal charges due to their illegal narcotic distribution involvement. A total of eleven out of the seventeen people convicted were charged with felonies and six of those were arrested. Drug trafficking has greatly induced money laundering throughout the world leading to negative economic effects.⁷

⁷ “Eleven people arrested in Washington and California in connection with cartel connected drug trafficking schemes.” *Department of Justice*, 26 October 2022, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdwa/pr/eleven-people-arrested-washington-and-california-connection-cartel-connected-drug>. Accessed 17 November 2022.

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