

# MEDICAL MARIJUANA LAWS AND WHY THEY NEED TO BE ADDRESSED

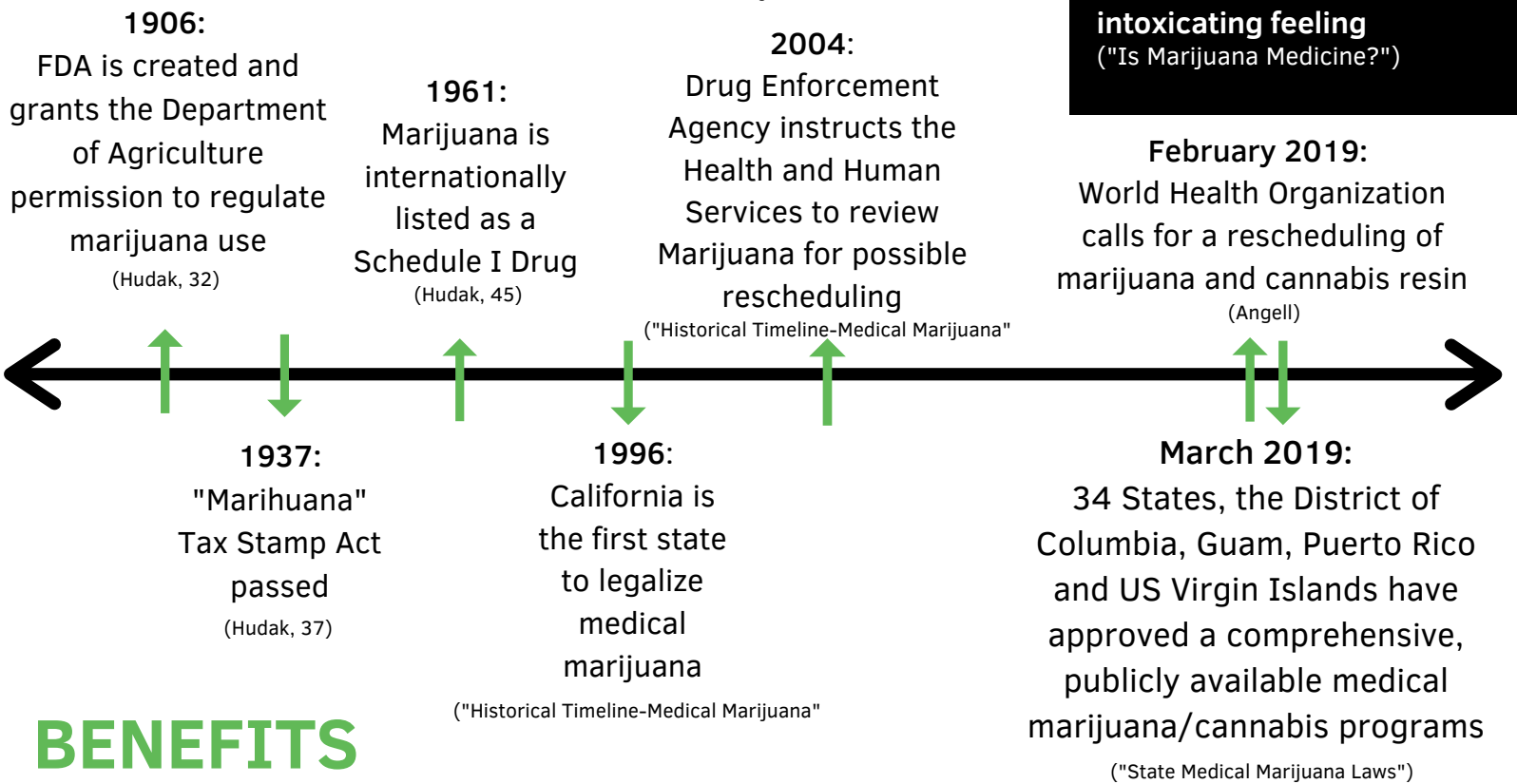
## What is Marijuana?

Marijuana is the dried flowers and leaves of the cannabis plant. It grows naturally and is often smoked (Figure 1).  
("Is Marijuana Medicine?")



Figure 1. Ross, Josh. "Dried Weed."

## BACKGROUND



## TERMS TO KNOW

**Cannabidiol or CBD:** A naturally occurring compound found within cannabis, with proven therapeutic properties ("What Is CBD?")

**MML:** Medical Marijuana Law

**Schedule I Drugs:** "drugs with no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse."  
("Drug Scheduling")

**Tetrahydrocannabinol or THC:** The principle psychoactive constituent of cannabis that gives users a "high" or intoxicating feeling ("Is Marijuana Medicine?")

## BENEFITS

The American College of Physicians "encourages the use of non-smoked forms of THC that have proven therapeutic value."

(Danovitch, 95)

Based on 2007-2014 data: If all 50 states had MMLs in 2014, the federal government would have saved **\$1.01 billion** in fee-for-service Medicaid.

(A.Bradford and D. Bradford, 949)



"Earth Day Hemp Expo."

## INTERNATIONAL MMLs

As of 2018, 30 countries worldwide have MMLs in some form. Canada has completely legalized marijuana (Williams.)

# MYTHS BUSTED:

"Being high is the same as being drunk"

MMLs lead to a decrease in violent and domestic crime, which are connected to alcohol use (Anderson and Rees, 228)

"MMLs will lead to more traffic fatalities"

Since MMLs, there has been a **8-11% drop** in traffic fatalities (A. Bradford and D. Bradford, 75)

State Cannabis Programs

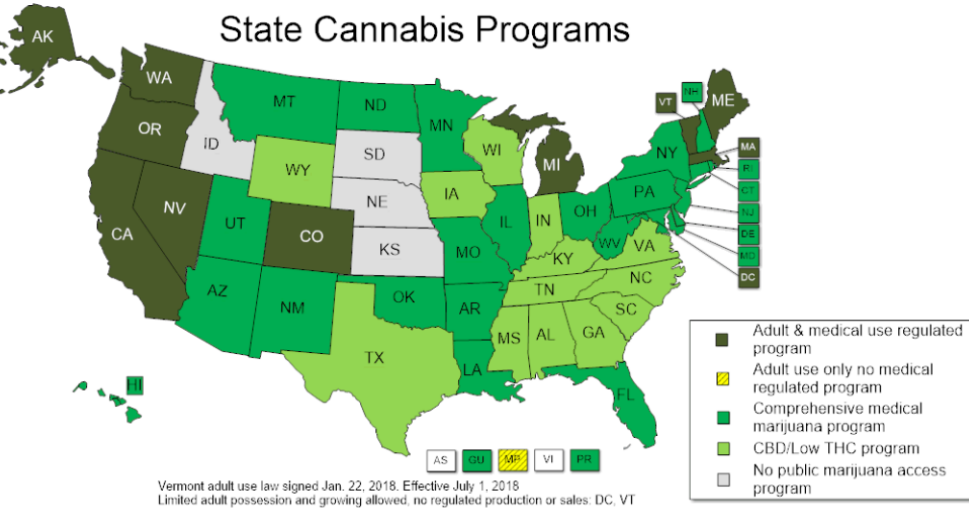


Figure 2. "State Cannabis Programs." National Conference of State Legislatures.

A disparity among the states that have MMLs exists. A study conducted in 2015 determined the variability of MMLs among the 24 states (as of 2015). For instance:

Illinois accepts the most conditions:

**40**

While Washington only accepts

**6**

But North Carolina is CBD-only and only accepts

**1**

Of the 24 states, the mean number of conditions treated is **12.8.**

So, the average state with a MML treats **27.2 less conditions than Illinois.**

(Bestrashniy and Winters, 642)

- As of May 2018, 2,132,777 Americans receive treatment through medical marijuana

("Number of Legal Medical Marijuana Patients")

- If medical marijuana was legal in all 50 states, the number of users would increase to approximately 3,514,510

("Number of Legal Medical Marijuana Patients")

Without federal legalization of medical marijuana, approximately **1.38 million** potential recipients have no access to a beneficial form of treatment

("Number of Legal Medical Marijuana Patients")

## THE PROBLEM

Despite research proving the therapeutic effects of marijuana, its listing as a Schedule I drug prevents any federal legislation from occurring. Without a federal MML, states have created their own laws. As of March 2019, 46 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia have a form of an MML ranging from CBD-only laws to a cannabis program. However, 4 states (Idaho, Nebraska, South Dakota and Kansas) have no form of a MML (Figure 2).

Thus, residents of those 4 states that have qualifying conditions or diseases in a neighboring state, have no access to medicinal marijuana (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Atomazul. "Medical Marijuana C." Adobe Stock Photo

## WHAT'S NEXT?

A review of marijuana as a Schedule I Drug, considering all recent scientific findings and evidence (Danovitch, 95).

Once marijuana is rescheduled it can be legalized on a federal level to ensure that all qualifying patients have access to medical marijuana.

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