

Be Informed: Massachusetts Ballot Question #4: Should we allow for recreational use of marijuana?

This November 8th, we will not only head to the polls to pick our nation's next president and vice-president, but we'll also determine what happens with a few local issues – in this year's case, four of them. While 35 initiatives were targeted, only these four made it to the ballot – there's always 2018.

Since 1996, Massachusetts has been voting on ballot measures each even number year – 32 in all. The state leans towards approval when it comes to these measures, 53% of the measures have been approved compared to 47% of them being struck down.

We've all heard the maxim "Be informed." when it comes to voting and what we'll attempt to do here is look at the four questions in an objective, factual way and share the general consensus and thought on both sides of the question.

Growing up, when I would watch the news, the reporter would do exactly that: report. Rarely could one tell which side of the issue that reporter or journalist was on. He would state the factual part of the story, then share what the proponents and opponents or detractors were saying. You were trusted to be intelligent enough to then make a decision.

These days, reporters have been replaced by commentators or in some cases, glorified bloggers. They make their stance on the issue clear, and spend most of their time attacking the opponents of their stance. It is an opinion piece, not the genuine article – pardon the pun. This has been the dearth of good, balanced journalism. I am a firm believer in presenting both sides and letting people decide and I also believe we can

do just that in a succinct and easy to understand manner.

Question #4: Recreational Marijuana?

This measure is for legalizing, regulating and taxing recreational marijuana in any form, for people 21 years of age and older. If passed, Massachusetts will join Alaska, Colorado, District of Columbia, Oregon and Washington.

Oppose:

Marijuana is a gateway to more, powerful, deadlier drugs and since it alters your perception, those who are “high” on the drug will be impaired when driving or operating machinery making them a threat to others. It may lead to addiction, may fall into the hands of children, and can lead to heart disease, lung ailments, and perhaps even mental illnesses. Finally, the measure would have a negative impact on the state’s medical marijuana treatment centers, by greatly raising the number of patients.

Propose:

A new industry is formed creating new businesses, employees and tax revenues. Since it will be regulated it removes a large portion of the criminal element from marijuana, creates a tamper-free product, and it can be purchased in a safer environment. That means better safety controls, a financial blow to illegal drug dealers, and less violent crimes. In addition, it is a matter of freedom when it comes to a drug that is, in essence, harmless, especially when compared to alcohol. Finally, there are a number of medical benefits it addresses ranging from as “mundane” as insomnia and headaches to something as serious as cancer.