

Pot Bill Tokes the Line on Public Safety

Published: Tuesday, 01 October 2019 07:51

By Tony Perkins - Family Research Council

When the alarm went off at Jennifer Hrobuchak's work, the 22-year-old district manager didn't think twice. She got in her car in the early morning hours and headed off to the store to investigate. The new college graduate, who had hoped to have a career saving people from drugs, never saw the man run through the red light straight at her. At 82 miles per hour, he slammed Jennifer's car across the road into a building that crushed and killed her. After seven years of telling the story, her mom, Corinne, still gets emotional. And it's no wonder. The man who hit her was high on marijuana and walked away from the scene completely unharmed. Her daughter never walked anywhere again.

There are [thousands of stories](#) like Jennifer's. Agonized parents like Jeffrey Veatch's whose son died snorting heroin, only after marijuana experimentation led him there. After the unimaginable pain of losing a child, the idea that anyone would make it easier for kids to get addicted to pot is hard for any of them to fathom. And yet, last Wednesday, in the U.S. House, more than 300 members of Congress put their names behind a bill that would help legitimize a business that's destroying and endangering lives.

It was the first ever vote on a stand-alone cannabis bill, not that the name would have told you so. The SAFE Banking Act, one of the more ridiculously named pieces of legislation in the Democratic House, would make it easier for marijuana companies to "open checking accounts and get business loans." Pot companies argue that it would make the entire market safer, since they tend to operate on a "cash-only basis" or pay sky-high fees to the banks who are willing to work with them. Amazingly, 321 members of Congress (including 91 Republicans) fell for this logic, which encourages banks to get involved in the sale of what the federal government still considers an illegal substance.

Luke Dean Niforatos, chief of staff for Smart Approaches to Marijuana, can't believe that the U.S. House would green-light a bill that would allow billions of dollars to flow into the pot market. Calling it the "Safe Vaping Act," Niforatos told listeners on "Washington Watch" that this would mean "tons more money for these companies to create more marijuana, vaping oils, more marijuana vapes, which would feed [into the crisis](#) that we're talking about right now today.

"It defies comprehension that the House would pass this," he argued. "And now it's in the Senate. And you have a number of senators -- [even solid Christians who are]... being swayed by this argument that marijuana industry needs access to these banks. You know, they need to hear from everyone loud and clear that there's a vaping crisis going on. The last thing we should do is allow money in to this industry that's putting out these marijuana vapes."

And while the Democratic House may be embracing pot, the reality, Luke explains, is that the rest of the country is having second thoughts.

"We actually had a dozen states or more reject marijuana legalization this year alone,

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including New York, New Jersey and Connecticut -- all very progressive states with progressive governors who were totally committed to legalizing marijuana. But minority groups and family groups and other groups came out and said, 'No thanks.'. So there's a movement now in this country to push against this -- and a lot of that is being stemmed by a number of major public health concerns we're discovering. Maybe not many people know this, but just three weeks ago, the United States surgeon general, Dr. Jerome Adams, just released the first surgeon general's advisory on marijuana in 40 years."

There are probably some conservatives out there who've fallen for the libertarian lie that the government can do a better job regulating marijuana and protecting people if it's legal. But [the research is clear](#): all that's happening in the states where pot is allowed are more arrests, more hospital visits, more suicides, more crime, more DUIs, more work-related problems -- more Jennifers.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) isn't going to be in a hurry to pass anything on the House Democrats' radical agenda. But the pressure is building on him, even from members in his own party, to chase these dead-end solutions. [Contact your senators](#) and ask them to hold the line on the SAFE Banking Act.

Tony Perkins's Washington Update is written with the aid of FRC senior writers.