

Proposed Resolution on the Decriminalization of Marijuana Possession

for the Arlington County Civic Federation

Whereas cannabis, commonly known as marijuana, can address pain, nausea and lack of appetite for those under treatment for cancer and HIV, and may also ease symptoms of epilepsy, multiple sclerosis and other conditionsⁱ

Whereas the 31 states plus DC have adopted “medical marijuana” programs, including Virginiaⁱⁱ

Whereas 76% of Virginians support decriminalizing possession of small amounts of marijuanaⁱⁱⁱ

Whereas arrests for marijuana possession continue to increase in Virginia, in contrast with a large decrease nationally and 436 arrests were made in Arlington in 2017 – on average, more than one per day^{iv}

Whereas those arrested for marijuana possession may lose their driver’s license, employment, housing, parental rights, access to financial aid/loans, face job discrimination and will spend dozens of hours and thousands of dollars as a consequence of this arrest and/or probation plea deal^v

Whereas black Arlington residents are almost 8 times more likely to be arrested than their white counterparts^{vi}

Be it resolved that the Arlington County Civic Federation urges the General Assembly to:

- Update the laws related to marijuana possession, decriminalizing possession of small amounts of marijuana by adults so that, at a maximum, reasonable fines are assessed rather than criminal charges.
- Expand Virginia’s medical cannabis program to allow for full-strength cannabis oils to be safely dispensed by pharmaceutical processors, reducing illegal sales in our communities and interstate trafficking.

Furthermore the Arlington County Civic Federation urges the Arlington Police Chief to:

- De-prioritize the enforcement of small scale marijuana possession to the lowest level possible, so that resources are focused on violent crimes and Arlington’s residents of color are no longer disproportionately searched, arrested and prosecuted for marijuana possession.

ⁱ <http://www.webmd.com/brain/ss/slideshow-medical-marijuana>, slide 4, accessed 12/17/16.

ⁱⁱ National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), “State Medical Marijuana Laws”. <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/state-medical-marijuana-laws.aspx>, accessed 10/22/18.

Virginia Department of Health Professions -- Board of Pharmacy, “Information for Patients/Parents and Legal Guardians [regarding CBD & THC-A Oil]”. <https://www.dhp.virginia.gov/pharmacy/PharmaceuticalProcessing/Patients.htm>, accessed 10/22/18.

ⁱⁱⁱ NBC News. “Poll : ¾ of Virginia voters support decriminalizing marijuana possession”, <http://www.nbc12.com/story/37447660/poll-finds-three-quarters-of-virginia-voters-support-decriminalizing-marijuana-possession/>, accessed 10/22/18 re: Feb 2018 survey by Wason Center for Public Policy – Christopher Newport University. <http://wasoncenter.cnu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Feb-7-2018-Final-2-1.pdf>

^{iv} Virginia Mercury. “Virginia marijuana arrests hit highest levels in a decade.” Accessed 10/22/18 at <https://www.virginiamercury.com/2018/09/25/marijuana-arrests-in-virginia-hit-highest-levels-in-a-decade/>. 27,852 arrests for possession were made in Virginia (2017), compared to under 20,000 in 2008-2009.

^v Weisberg Attorneys. “What are Virginia’s laws regarding marijuana?” <https://www.weisbergattorneys.com/Articles/What-are-Virginia-s-laws-regarding-marijuana.shtml> accessed 10/22/18.

^{vi} Drug Policy Alliance. “Racial Disparities in Marijuana Arrests in Virginia (2003-2013).” Accessed 10/22/18 at [https://www.drugpolicy.org/sites/default/files/Racial Disparities in Marijuana Arrests in Virginia 2003-2013.pdf](https://www.drugpolicy.org/sites/default/files/Racial%20Disparities%20in%20Marijuana%20Arrests%20in%20Virginia%202003-2013.pdf)

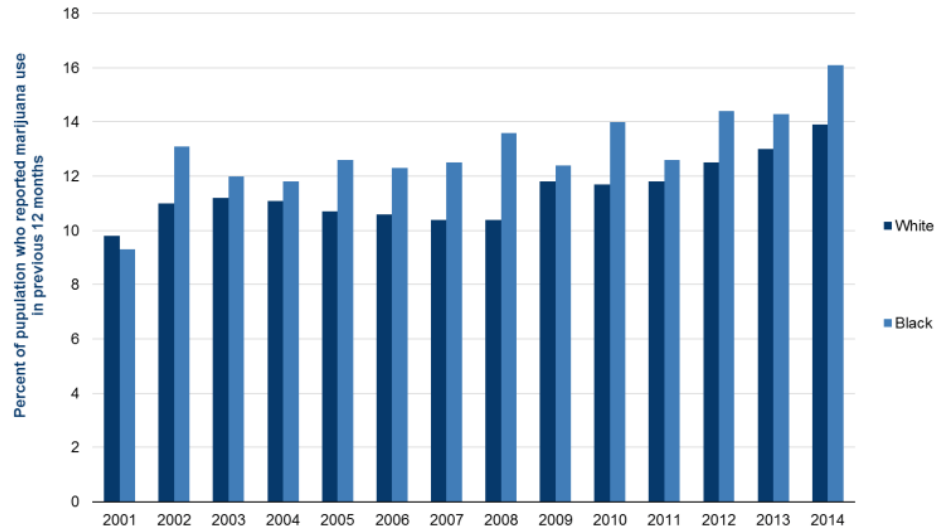
Background information / graphics for Decriminalization resolution

Procedural History

A medical marijuana resolution was adopted by the Civic Federation on January 3rd, 2017 by a 50-1 vote. When introduced, the medical marijuana resolution originally included a whereas clause addressing decriminalization. The decriminalization related clause was stripped out as a recommendation of the membership to clarify the purpose of the resolution, although it had unanimous support from the Legislation Committee members. A resolution focused specifically on decriminalization was re-introduced at the September 23rd, 2018 Legislative Committee meeting with approved by consensus 10/21/18 by these voting members:

Ron Haddox, Juliet Hiznay, Donald Gurney, John Bloom, Andy Ludwig, Allen Norton, John O'Hara

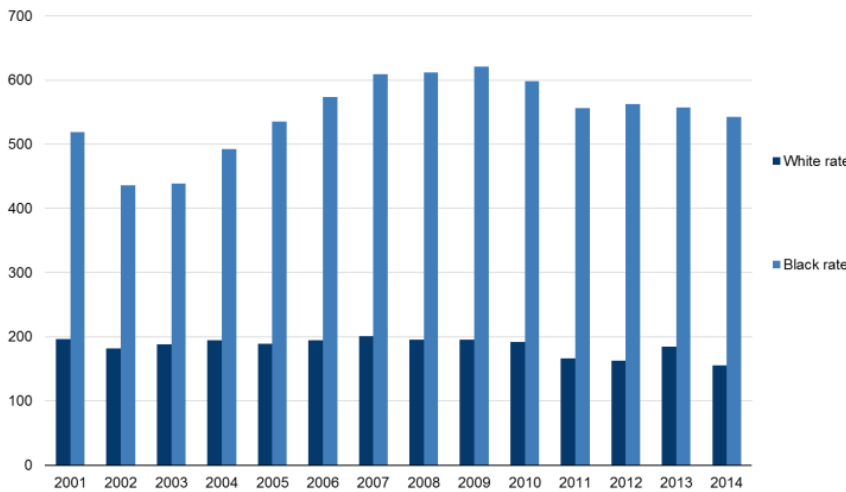
Annual marijuana use prevalence, by race



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Program, U.S. Census Bureau
Data provided by Jon Gettman, Shenandoah University

BROOKINGS

Arrest rate per 100,000 for marijuana possession, by race



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting Program, U.S. Census Bureau
Data provided by Jon Gettman, Shenandoah University

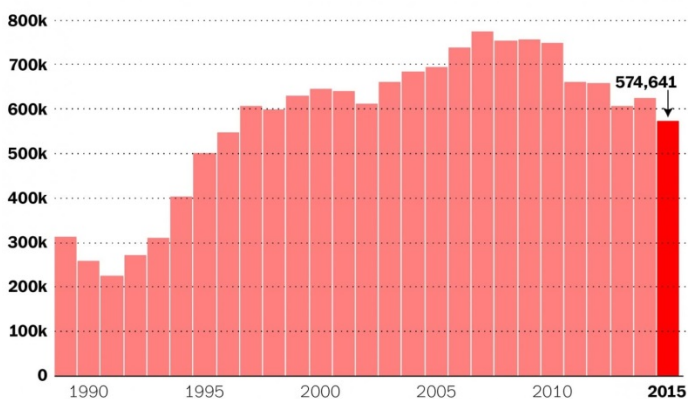
Jurisdiction	Ratio of Black Rate To White Rate		
	2011	2012	2013
Fairfax	3.0	3.1	2.9
Chesterfield	2.7	2.8	4.1
Prince William	2.1	2.0	2.0
Virginia Beach City	2.4	2.7	3.2
Chesapeake City	3.8	3.4	4.2
Richmond City	1.1	1.4	1.7
Newport News City	3.7	4.1	4.2
Norfolk City	4.8	4.4	5.1
Roanoke City	4.4	4.8	3.9
Lynchburg City	3.2	4.1	3.7
Hampton City	2.6	2.6	3.0
Arlington	7.3	5.9	7.8
Loudoun	2.1	2.3	2.8
Henrico	2.7	3.5	3.9

Source: "Racial Disparities in Marijuana Arrests in Virginia (2003-2013)"
Jon Gettman / Drug Policy Alliance

BROOKINGS

Marijuana arrests drop in 2015

Annual number of arrests for simple marijuana possession, 1989-2015



WAPO.ST/WONKBLOG

Source: FBI Unified Crime Statistics

12 Largest Counties in Virginia	Population, 2012	2009 arrests	2015 arrests*	2015 Arrests per 100,000 residents	Arrests - growth rate /yr
Fairfax	1,118,683	1,572	3,029	270.8	11.6%
City of VA Beach	445,378	683	673	151.1	-0.2%
Prince William*	430,100	1,447	763	177.4	-10.1%
Loudoun	337,248	477	390	115.6	-3.3%
Chesterfield	323,862	975	1,614	498.4	8.8%
Henrico	315,200	604	723	229.4	3.0%
City of Norfolk	246,007	335	541	219.9	8.3%
City of Chesapeake	228,303	879	845	370.1	-0.7%
Arlington*	221,275	278	389	175.8	5.8%
City of Richmond	210,857	582	434	205.8	-4.8%
City of Newport News	180,781	1,239	552	305.3	-12.6%
City of Alexandria	146,389	329	484	330.6	6.6%

- Population data obtained from : <http://www.us-places.com/Virginia/population-by-County.htm>

- Arrest data via FOIA requests to the Virginia State Police

-* Prince William & Arlington arrest data is from 2016.

- 436 arrests made in Arlington, 2017 -- a 12% increase over 2016, or 197.0 arrests/100,000 residents