



PREVENTION IS THE KEY TO ECONOMIC RECOVERY

California spends less than 1% on prevention; over 99% shoveling up the damage

By Roger Morgan, Exec Director, Coalition for A Drug-Free California

Alcohol, tobacco and drugs (ATOD) are **the root cause of almost all the social and economic problems of California, yet they are largely ignored.** Currently, the state spends 1/3rd of 1% on prevention and the balance shoveling up the damage. This is horrible economic and social policy, and a travesty when the underlying cause is a preventable disease.

Research has shown that **“..... if a young person reaches age 21 prior to smoking, abusing alcohol or using drugs, they should virtually never do so.”** (Joseph Califano Jr.) Getting them to 21 intact is, of course, the challenge.

In medical circles, addiction to alcohol, tobacco and drugs is referred to as a **pediatric onset disease** because it almost always starts with kids, aged 10 to 17 years old. So **to protect the future of the state and nation, we have to start by protecting the kids.** We must take measures to defer the onset of alcohol, tobacco and drugs until they reach adulthood and their bodies and brains are less vulnerable to harm and addiction.

Currently, marijuana is easy to get. Because of the perception that it is medicine and legal, in some areas like San Diego, more kids are smoking pot than tobacco. Making it more readily available and lower costs will certainly escalate the level of use by young people and contribute even more harm to the state and nation.

Substance abuse in general, of which marijuana is a major contributing factor, contributes to the following economic problems in California:

	<u>In Billions</u>
Direct Costs In the Budget	\$ 19.9 (CASA 2005)
Lost Productivity (Doubles the above)	\$ 19.9 (Lockyer 2003)
High School Drop Out Rate	\$ 46.4 (UC Santa Barbara)
Prison Overcrowding	\$ 8.0 (State of Calif)
Traffic Accidents	\$ 2.4 (13% of \$33 billion)
Total	<u>\$ 96.6 billion</u>

Rounded to today’s dollars – well over \$100 billion

Prevention of substance abuse is the biggest opportunity for the State to correct the budget problem, and that should start immediately by stopping the proliferation of marijuana.

We strongly recommend that this and future Administrations create an Office of Drug Control as part of the Governor’s staff, as has been done in Florida and other states, There are prevention programs that work.