

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 16, 2012

The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Michele M. Leonhart
Administrator
Drug Enforcement Administration
8701 Morrissette Drive
Springfield, VA 22152

Dear Attorney General Holder and Administrator Leonhart:

We are writing to urge federal law enforcement to consider carefully the recent decisions by the people of Colorado and Washington to legalize small amounts of marijuana for personal use by adults. Under the new laws, each state will establish a comprehensive regulatory scheme governing the production, sale and personal use of marijuana. We believe that it would be a mistake for the federal government to focus enforcement action on individuals whose actions are in compliance with state law.

We are concerned that the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) continue to threaten individuals and businesses acting within the scope of their states' laws on the medicinal use of marijuana despite formal guidance on exercising prosecutorial discretion. These actions contradict assurances made by DOJ in 2009 that the Department would not prioritize criminal charges against those who act in compliance with state law. It is also a poor use of limited federal resources. We hope your agencies will not take a similar approach with regard to individuals and businesses who comply with Colorado's and Washington's new laws, each of which were approved with overwhelming public support.

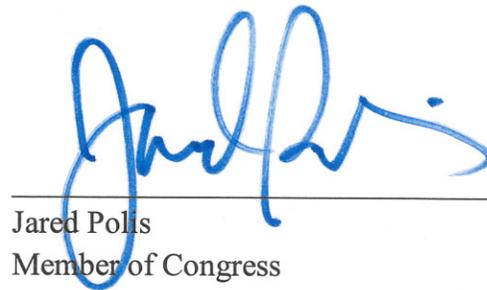
As Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis once observed, states are the laboratories of democracy. The people of Colorado and Washington have decided that marijuana ought to be regulated much like alcohol, with strong and efficient regulation of production, retail sales, and distribution, coupled with strict laws against underage use and driving while intoxicated. The voters chose to eliminate the illegal marijuana market controlled by cartels and criminals and recognized the disproportionate impact that marijuana prohibition has on minorities. These states have chosen to move from a drug policy that spends millions of dollars turning ordinary Americans into criminals toward one that will tightly regulate the use of marijuana while raising tax revenue to support cash-strapped state and local governments. We believe this approach embraces the goals of existing federal marijuana law: to stop international trafficking, deter domestic organized criminal organizations, stop violence associated with the drug trade and protect children.

While we recognize that other states have chosen a different path, and further understand that the federal government has an important role to play in protecting against interstate shipments of marijuana leaving Colorado or Washington, we ask that your Departments take no enforcement action against anyone who acts in compliance with the laws of Colorado, Washington and any other states that choose to regulate access to marijuana for medicinal or personal use. The voters of these states chose, by a substantial margin, to forge a new and effective policy with respect to marijuana. The tide of public opinion is changing, both at the ballot box and in state legislatures across the country. We believe that the collective judgment of voters and state lawmakers must be respected. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

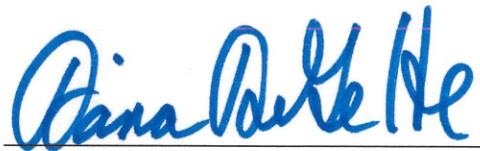
Sincerely,



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Jared Polis
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress



Barney Frank
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



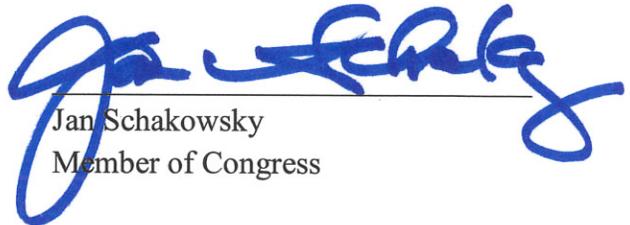
Sam Farr
Member of Congress



Jim Moran
Member of Congress



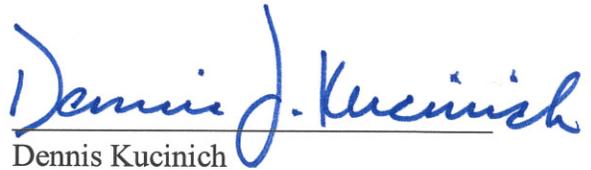
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



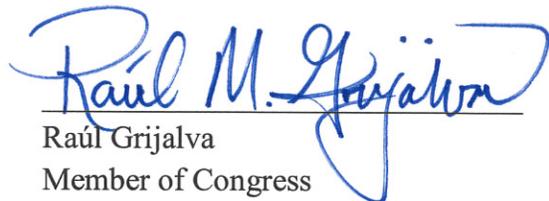
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Dennis Kucinich
Member of Congress



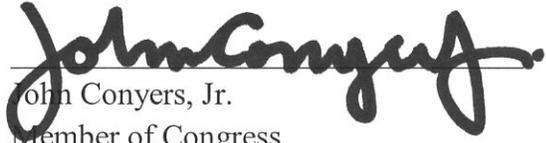
Mike Honda
Member of Congress



Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Conyers, Jr." in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed text.

John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress