

# FOREWORD

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In this report, we have endeavored to set the record straight regarding one of the most pervasive myths about marijuana. The truth, supported overwhelmingly by the best data available, is that our prisons are *not* overflowing with people arrested just for smoking pot. On the contrary, we are seeking—through new treatment-oriented approaches such as drug courts—to divert those whose involvement with drugs is limited to their own use, while actively working to disrupt drug-trafficking organizations by prosecuting those who distribute or deal in illicit drugs.

Of course, there will always be those who reject everything the government says or does. There are also those who are willing to spread false information for the purpose of legalizing drug trafficking and use—despite all the harm this would cause and the overwhelming public opposition to it.

While we cannot state categorically that no simple marijuana user has ever received a jail or prison sentence, the evidence is overwhelming that these cases are rare. The system on the whole is sound, it is just, and it is working as it should. Moreover, recent innovations such as drug courts are signs that the system is improving still.



**JOHN P. WALTERS**

Those who traffic in illegal drugs, who prey on our nation's youth with poisons that destroy bodies, minds, and futures, should find no refuge in the criminal justice system. Long prison terms, in many cases, are the most appropriate response to these predators. But for those on the other end of the criminal spectrum—the mere users—different measures are often in order, such as intervention, drug treatment, and the offer of another chance to end their destructive behavior.

The goal of drug laws, after all, is not just to penalize, but to keep people from harming themselves and others. So if we can stop these users now, before they become dependent and while they still have time to turn their lives around, the laws will have served their purpose well.

A large, stylized handwritten signature of John P. Walters in black ink.

John P. Walters  
Director  
Office of National Drug Control Policy