

CRIG SEMINAR

The Impact of Marijuana Legalization on Law Enforcement in Surrounding States

Presenter: Kyle Ward

Abstract:

Since the legalization of recreational marijuana occurred in Colorado, politicians, academics, and the public have been paying close attention to what impact, if any, the legalization of recreational marijuana has on crime, substance use and abuse, and state revenue gains. However, research has not identified the potential impact that marijuana legalization has had on law enforcement officers in neighboring states. This study employed survey methodology to explore how the legalization of recreational marijuana in Colorado has affected law enforcement officers and their duties in states that border Colorado. Utilizing multi-stage cluster sampling, municipal police departments and sheriff's offices in Kansas, Nebraska, and Wyoming were selected based off their distance from Colorado for inclusion within the study. Results indicate that law enforcement officers view Colorado's legalization of recreational marijuana as having a negative impact on their enforcement duties. Respondents note an increase in potency, perceived juvenile use, and strain on their resources as major issues they are now having to deal with. Analysis indicates that departments further away from Colorado perceive less of an impact than counties closer to Colorado's border. Compared to Nebraska and Kansas, respondents from Wyoming perceived a larger impact on enforcement, but these differences were diminished when controlling for personal perceptions of marijuana.

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