

## **Arguments against recreational marijuana in Arizona**

To get a job at Woodworkers Source, potential employees must pass a drug test. There's a good reason for that, said Keith Stephens, owner of the Scottsdale-based lumber-supply business: "Many, many businesses, including mine, have a certain element of risk. In my case it's driving a forklift loaded with heavy material and being in the shop with chop saws," said Stephens, 72, of Paradise Valley.

If Arizona voters legalize marijuana for recreational use through a ballot measure poised to appear on the November ballot, Stephens's worries it would become more difficult to find qualified workers. Stephens, who employs more than 30 people and whose company did \$6 million in sales last year, is part of what is quickly becoming a united front of businesses, CEOs and commerce and tourism groups against legalizing the drug that is still prohibited by federal law.

In addition to making it more difficult to recruit workers, they argue legalization could lead to increased workplace-safety problems, higher worker-compensation costs and reduced productivity and make Arizona less appealing for prospective employers. "I don't want them hurt ... I don't want the liability," Stephens said of his employees, "and I want them to be able to properly take care of our customers."

The initiative does not authorize employees to work while impaired, nor does it require employers to allow possession or consumption of marijuana at work. Currently, employers are allowed to observe impairment and record it before they terminate or discipline employees for suspected marijuana use. Under the measure, employers would be allowed to maintain drug-free policies. But the measure provides no standards for what constitutes impairment by marijuana. And state law also offers no standard. "It purports to 'regulate marijuana like alcohol,' but the problem is you can test for alcohol with a breathalyzer ... but you can't do marijuana the same way," said Julie Pace, an employment attorney.

Complicating any effort to create such a definition is the fact that marijuana metabolites can remain in users' systems for weeks after the marijuana high wears off. "It's not like there's a certain limit or a cut-off and HR knows what to do, because it stays in the system for so long," Pace said, making it difficult for employers to determine level of impairment while at work.

She offered an example: This week she got a call from a Phoenix company asking whether it could reject a newly hired forklift driver who tested positive for marijuana. Based on the test, it was difficult to determine when the employee last used marijuana. "That's the problem," Pace said.

**Colorado reported 15.2 percent of residents 18 and older had used marijuana in the past 30 days, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, which relied on data from 2013 and 2014. That's up from prior-year data, where usage was 12.9 percent.**

**A survey released by drug-testing company Quest Diagnostics in 2014 found Colorado's marijuana-positivity test rates increased 20 percent between 2012 and 2013 while Washington's increased 23**

**percent. That's compared with the 5 percent average increase among the U.S. general workforce in all 50 states, according to the company. Both states were experiencing increases in marijuana-positivity rates before legalization at the end of 2012, according to the company said.**

Steve Sanghi, chairman and CEO of Chandler-based Microchip Technology Inc., said legalization would be detrimental to Arizona's workforce and society overall. Sanghi said his company employs about 2,000 people in Arizona and 14,000 worldwide.

The company operates a facility in Colorado Springs, and he said "the management there is continually reporting large number of problems with the employees," namely failed drug tests, productivity and absenteeism.

"I would never move my business from Arizona to Colorado today and wouldn't expand the business in Colorado because of the problems they're having," Sanghi said. "If Arizona passes this law, that would be a significant problem, then we'll become anti-Arizona and we wouldn't expand our manufacturing presence here."

**Mark Minter, executive director of the Arizona Builders Alliance, said his members are concerned about safety issues, particularly in an industry where it's critical to be alert and sober while on the job. "We're concerned about increased use in the workforce, we're concerned about being able to run a drug- and alcohol-free workplace so that people are safe and people don't get injured, or killed or maimed in the workplace."**

Taxes from Marijuana sales in Arizona are overstated by many proponents. Best estimates are \$35 to \$48 million in taxes which is less than ½ of 1% of Arizona's Budget.

No study has been done estimating the cost of legal use, including accidents and enforcement

### **The Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking (RMHIDTA) report in just three years since**

**legalization:** *The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Program (HIDTA) is an important component of the President's National Drug Control Strategy which provides additional federal resources to those areas to help eliminate or reduce drug trafficking and its harmful consequences.*

Marijuana-related traffic deaths increased 48 percent.

Over 20 percent of all traffic deaths were marijuana related compared to only 10 percent six years ago.

Marijuana-related emergency department visits increased 49 percent.

Marijuana-related hospitalizations increased 32 percent.

Marijuana-related calls to the Rocky Mountain Poison Center increased 100 percent.

Diversion of Colorado marijuana to other states increased 37 percent by vehicle and 427 percent by parcels.

Colorado youth now rank number one in the nation for marijuana use and 74 percent higher than the national average.

Colorado college-age group now rank number one in the nation for marijuana use and 62 percent higher than the national average.

Colorado adults now rank number one in the nation for marijuana use and 104 percent higher than the national average.