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#### ANTHONY JOHNSON

Treating marijuana use as a crime has failed. Last year, more than 11,000 adults were arrested or cited for marijuana use in Oregon, according to the Oregon State Police. One in every 14 arrests in Oregon is for small marijuana offenses; that’s 7 percent of all arrests in the state. It is distracting police and sheriffs from taking on violent crimes, and it perpetuates a system run by organized gangsters and cartels.

One of the best ways to understand how the mechanics of Measure 91 work is to compare the current system of prohibition to a regulated system we could have by passing this measure.

Right now, marijuana is sold in back alleys and on playing fields. The sellers — drug dealers — don’t ask for ID, aren’t held accountable when they sell to young people, don’t provide any drug prevention or education programs. Nobody really knows what they’re getting because the product is untested, unlabeled and unregulated, while gangs and cartels turn a tax-free profit.

Under the regulated system of Measure 91, marijuana would be sold at licensed, audited, inspected, properly-zoned facilities that are strictly regulated and away from schools. The sellers would be licensed salespeople who have passed background checks, who ask for ID, and who would be held accountable in sting operations to make sure they don’t sell to youths.

Only adults 21 and older could buy and possess marijuana. The product would be tested, and packaged in labelled, child-proof containers. Money from purchases would go to legitimate businesses and to taxes used for essential public services.

Under Measure 91, the new revenue from taxes will go to schools, state and local police, mental health and addiction services, drug treatment and drug prevention programs. This revenue will be distributed through a special account that, by law, must go to these programs. There is not one vital public resource on that list that doesn’t need more support. The Josephine County Sheriff’s office doesn’t have enough deputies to answer all the calls to 911, especially those late at night. Freeing up law enforcement from chasing minor marijuana offenses and handing over new money for the budget is a perfect fit for public safety. Federal money for schools is coming up short; a sustainable, local industry that provides support through tax revenue can help make some of that up.

When it comes to regulating, taxing and legalizing marijuana, Oregon has the benefit of going third. We've already learned a lot from Washington and Colorado's legalization of marijuana. Measure 91 is designed to take advantage of lessons learned from Washington and Colorado's laws and improve upon them. And Measure 91 has been designed with built-in flexibility to continue adjusting the law in the future if needed. By the time the first licensed storefronts open in Oregon in 2016, there will be nearly a decade of combined experience and data to draw from in the three states. The longer we wait, the more lives are ruined, the budgets for schools and sheriffs continue to come up short, and drug cartels gain a stronger foothold in Southern Oregon's wilderness land.

To quote former Oregon Supreme Court Justice William Riggs, "I think it's inevitable that marijuana is coming to Oregon in one form or another, and I hope it comes in the form of a good bill like this one. If we are going to have marijuana in Oregon, this is the way to do it." Measure 91 is comprehensive — more than 35 pages long — and writing it was a huge project. We went through more than 50 drafts. We got input and help from parents, law enforcement, tax experts, legislative lawyers, drug treatment specialists, parents, Democrats, Republicans, independents, the governor's office and many more.

We studied what worked in other states, and we based the current bill on one that's already in effect in Oregon — the laws used to control beer, wine and liquor — because we wanted to use existing state infrastructure and not create a new agency. Yet, under Measure 91 marijuana is even more strictly regulated than alcohol, including no public use, and limits on the amount one can buy or have on them at any given time.

It is inevitable that marijuana will be legalized — and if it's going to happen, we need the right restrictions put into place. Measure 91 controls marijuana from seed to sale; penalizes access by minors; keeps drug-free workplace rules, and prevents public use.

Measure 91 is by far the most restrictive and responsible plan for regulation, taxation and legalization of marijuana ever put before Oregon voters. Please read it yourself at [www.voteyeson91.com](http://www.voteyeson91.com).

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Anthony Johnson is the chief petitioner and a co-author of Measure 91.