



Office of the Attorney General

Washington, D. C. 20530

October 13, 2010

Dear Former Administrators of the Drug Enforcement Administration:

Thank you for your continuing commitment to curbing substance abuse and to addressing its devastating effects on many of our communities. Your letter expressing concern about the potential impact of the *Regulate, Control and Tax Cannabis Act of 2010*, now pending in California as Proposition 19, is an unprecedented bipartisan statement that reflects the national significance of this issue.

Let me state clearly that the Department of Justice strongly opposes Proposition 19. If passed, this legislation will greatly complicate federal drug enforcement efforts to the detriment of our citizens. Regardless of the passage of this or similar legislation, the Department of Justice will remain firmly committed to enforcing the Controlled Substances Act ("CSA") in all states. Prosecution of those who manufacture, distribute, or possess any illegal drugs – including marijuana – and the disruption of drug trafficking organizations is a core priority of the Department. Accordingly, we will vigorously enforce the CSA against those individuals and organizations that possess, manufacture, or distribute marijuana for recreational use, even if such activities are permitted under state law.

As you know, we have longstanding partnerships with local and state law enforcement agencies. These partnerships help us to assess drug trafficking problems and design joint initiatives to reduce or eliminate the production, manufacture, transportation, distribution, and chronic use of illegal drugs, as well as related offenses such as money laundering. The broad language of Proposition 19 that would prohibit state and local law enforcement from seizing marijuana that is in compliance with state law would provide a significant impediment to these joint efforts by law enforcement to target drug traffickers who frequently distribute marijuana alongside cocaine and other controlled substances. We must ensure that our communities are safe for all citizens and, if passed, Proposition 19 would significantly undermine that critical objective.

I assure you that the Department is considering all available legal and policy options in the event Proposition 19 is enacted. We appreciate your August 24, 2010, submission and will give serious consideration to the information and authority you provide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric H. Holder, Jr.", written over a white background.

Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Attorney General