

http://www.app.com/article/20120519/NJOPINION03/305200029/SCOTTI-Bill-reduce-marijuana-penalties-makes-sense?odyssey=nav|

SCOTTI: Bill to reduce marijuana penalties makes sense

9:55 AM, May. 19, 2012 | 4 Comments

Recommend 42 people recommend this. Be the fi

Recommend 42 Tweet 0 +1 0 [Email Print Share] A A +

FILED UNDER

Opinion
Commentary

More than 22,000 people are arrested every year in New Jersey for simple possession of marijuana. The results of these arrests can be devastating.

Currently, possession of two ounces or less of marijuana is a disorderly persons offense that carries a penalty of up to six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine. Additional fines of more than \$600 may also be imposed under the existing law.

Currently, a conviction also results in a criminal record that cannot be expunged for at least five years.

Once an individual is convicted, he or she is subject to a system of legal discrimination that makes it difficult or impossible to secure housing, employment, public assistance, federal student aid for higher education, and even a driver's license.

Even without a conviction, the collateral consequences of a mere arrest can include immeasurable stigma and humiliation, the sometimes unmanageable financial burden of posting bail and hiring a lawyer, and lost hours at work or school.

Most New Jerseyans agree that these penalties and consequences are far too severe.

A 2011 Eagleton poll found that 58 percent of New Jerseyans think penalties for use of marijuana should be decreased, and 55 percent think penalties for possession of marijuana should be eliminated entirely.

Most Popular

- 1 A Bon-boozle OF
- 2 Bon Jovi an iconic
- 3 Thousands hold tv government jobs
- 4 City pleased, relie handled crowds al
- 5 Police say man, 8 episode after car r

Most Viewed



Now the New Jersey Legislature is taking heed and considering a common-sense and compassionate reform.

On Monday, the Assembly Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing on Assembly Bill 1465, which would make possession of one-half ounce, or 15 grams, of marijuana a summary offense similar to a parking ticket and carrying a fine of between \$150 and \$500.

Arresting and prosecuting otherwise law-abiding citizens for a few sugar packets' worth of marijuana is a waste of law enforcement resources and taxpayer money. The current punishment doesn't fit the offense.

A-1465 is a popular and practical reform that will result in fairer penalties and less hardship, while saving taxpayers money.

Fourteen other states (Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Ohio and Oregon) have already decriminalized possession of small quantities of marijuana for personal use, in amounts ranging from one-half ounce to three ounces.


A-1465 has 18 co-sponsors and bipartisan support. These sponsors are to be commended for moving forward with legislation that will promote fairness and save taxpayer money.

In 2010, there were more than 800,000 marijuana arrests in the United States — one every 37 seconds.

Almost 90 percent of these arrests were for simple possession, not distribution or manufacturing.

It is time to end this insanity. Monday's vote in Trenton is a step in the right direction.

Roseanne Scotti is New Jersey state director of the Drug Policy Alliance.

 Recommend 42

 Tweet 0

 +1 0



Bamboozle Saturday (05)
May. 19, 2012

PHOTO GALLERIES



Final Day at Bamboozle Part II

New Jersey DUI

New Jersey DWI Defense Assistance? 800-262-7111
www.njdwi.com

OPEN

View Comments (4) | Share your thoughts »

VIDEO PICKS





Bamboozle Saturday (05/19/12)
May 19, 2012



Bamboozle Sunday (5/20/12)
May 20, 2012



Asbury Park Trayvon Martin Comments (4/11/12)
Apr 11, 2012

YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN

The Bon Jovi effect (The Asbury Park Press)

Marijuana penalty lessening weighed (The Asbury Park Press)

Assembly panel scheduled to vote on bill to decriminalize marijuana (The Asbury Park Press)

NJ to hear marijuana decriminalization bill (The Asbury Park Press)

Despite student support, Holmdel HS teacher denied tenure (The Asbury Park Press)

Dover police allege drug distribution (The Asbury Park Press)

SPONSORED LINKS

The 10 Richest Colleges in America (TheStreet)

Jersey Shore's JWOWW Flaunts Her Body With a Plunging Neckline (StyleBistro)

4 risky places to swipe your debit card (Bankrate)

Trump Warns 'Massive Inflation' Coming (Moneynews)

13 Things the Funeral Director Won't Tell You (Reader's Digest)

11 Public Universities with the Worst Graduation Rates (The Fiscal Times)

[?]

Alcohol & drug treatment
Compassionate & affordable 30 day treatment and detox, get help today
www.pasadenarecoverycenter.com

AdChoices ▶

REAL DEALS



Flip, shop and save on specials from your favorite retailers in Asbury Park, NJ 07754

GET DEALS NOW

USER PHOTOS



Checking out Cesar's Casino in Atlantic City, NJ
In: NJ Boardwalk moments
By: Anonymous
From: Asbury Park Press



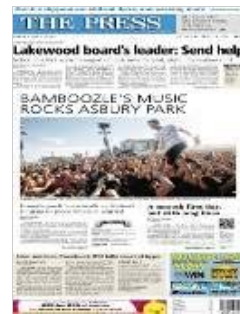
Playing The slots at Cesar's Casino, Atlantic City, NJ
In: NJ Boardwalk moments
By: Anonymous
From: Asbury Park Press



Bally's Casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey
In: NJ Boardwalk moments
By: Anonymous
From: Asbury Park Press

SUBMIT YOUR PHOTOS

SUBSCRIBE!



Sign up for home delivery today

FACEBOOK ACTIVITY



Amy Quinn shared Head Bamboozle? Patience is to deal with traffic and p...
Wednesday



Georgian Court to go c
46 people recommend th



Heading to Bamboozle the best advice
One person liked this.

Facebook social plugin



NEWS

- [Business](#)
- [New Jersey News](#)
- [Watchdog News](#)
- [Press on Your Side](#)
- [Jersey Mayhem/Crime](#)
- [Learning](#)
- [NJ Politics](#)
- [NJ/US Lotteries](#)
- [Special Reports](#)

DEALS

- [Deal Divas blog](#)
- [Monmouth Best Buys](#)
- [Ocean Best Buys](#)
- [Deal Chicken](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Grocery Coupons](#)
- [Local Ads](#)
- [Circulars](#)

COMMUNITIES

- [Monmouth County](#)
- [Monmouth County](#)
- [Ocean County](#)
- [Ocean County](#)
- [All Towns](#)

LEISURE

- [Entertainment](#)
- [Food & Dining](#)
- [Recipes](#)
- [Living](#)
- [Pets News](#)
- [Event Calendar](#)
- [Social Announcements](#)
- [Horoscopes](#)
- [Crossword](#)

DATA UNIVERSE

- [NJ Employees](#)
- [Federal Employees](#)
- [NJ Teachers](#)
- [Postal Employees](#)
- [NJ Pensions](#)
- [Property Assessments](#)
- [Property Sales](#)
- [Monmouth Jail Inmates](#)
- [Conviction Records](#)

OBITUARIES

- [In Remembrance](#)
- [Funeral Home Directory](#)
- [Place an obituary](#)
- [Send flowers](#)
- [Sign up for alerts](#)

SPORTS

- [High School Sports](#)
- [College Sports](#)
- [Pro Sports](#)
- [Fishing & Boating](#)
- [Sports Photos](#)
- [Sports Blogs](#)

OPINION

- [Editorials](#)
- [Blogs](#)
- [Letters to the Editor](#)
- [@Issue/Hot Topics](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [Commentary](#)
- [Student Voices](#)
- [Reader Panel](#)

HELP

- [Customer Service](#)
- [Subscriber Services](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Advertiser Info](#)
- [Reprints/Back Issues](#)
- [Web Services](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Site Index](#)
- [FAQ](#)



[News](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars for Sale](#) | [Homes for Sale](#) | [Apartments for Rent](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Shopping](#)



GANNETT

Copyright © 2012 www.APP.com. All rights reserved.

Users of this site agree to the [Terms of Service](#), [Privacy Notice/Your California Privacy Rights](#), and [Ad Choices](#)

