

## TAKE A STAND FOR SENSIBLE DRUG LAWS!

April 5, 2007

- **Medical Marijuana: New Mexico Governor Signs Law**
- **Methamphetamine: Report Tracks Decline in Use**
- **Higher Education Act Drug Provision: Repeal Ahead?**
- **Featured Report: Prison Rape and the Drug War**
- **Lancet Calls for Drug Classification According to Harm**
- **ACLU Forum: Wakarusa '07 - Privacy Rights in Public Places**

**Next Volunteer Meeting April 28, 1 p.m. at the DPFKS offices, 941 Kentucky Street, Lawrence, KS. Call 785-841-8278 for more info.**

The Drug Policy Forum of Kansas is a 501(c)(3) organization. [Donations](#) are tax-deductible.

### **Volunteers Needed for Wakarusa Music Festival**

DPFKS members interested in volunteering to work a few hours a day at the [Wakarusa Music Festival](#), should send us an [email \(info@dpfks.org\)](mailto:info@dpfks.org). The festival takes place June 7-10 at Clinton State Park outside of Lawrence.

### **Presidential Candidate Signs Medical Marijuana Bill into Law**

New Mexico is now the 12<sup>th</sup> state to protect seriously ill patients from arrest and jail for using medical marijuana with their doctors' approval.

[Gov. Bill Richardson](#) is the first governor in history to enact a medical marijuana law while running for the presidency. And the bill he signed is the only one of the 12 state-level medical marijuana laws to require the state government to authorize the distribution of medical marijuana to qualifying patients.

"It's a humane piece of legislation. It does not mean I support legalizing marijuana," Richardson said in the [New Mexico press](#). "It means that we are alleviating suffering ... and I must tell you, I was overcome by the personal stories of pain and the personal appeals I got."

New Mexico joins Hawaii, Rhode Island, and Vermont as only the fourth state to enact its medical marijuana law via the legislative process. The other eight states that have enacted similar laws — Alaska, California, Colorado, Maine, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington — have all done so via ballot initiatives.

### **Meth Use in Decline**

The [Associated Press](#) is reporting on several studies showing meth use declining in many parts of the US.

A study by the [Hazelden Foundation](#) found emergency room visits dropped in Minnesota's twin cities from 1,402 in 2006 to 251 in 2007.

In a report released in January, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) found that the number of persons who used meth for the first time in the last 12 months had decreased from 318,000 in 2004 to 192,000 in 2005. Read the report [here](#).

This is good news and shows what a combination of law enforcement and public education can do to deter drug use in America. Because, as we know, tobacco use declined 24% over 8 years due to public education and laws banning smoking in public places!

### **Higher Education Act (HEA) Aid Elimination Penalty: Is the End in Sight?**

Since 1998, students in our nation's colleges and universities who receive grants, financial aid, or work-study funds are subject to loss of aid for up to one year if they are convicted in state or federal court of drug possession.

According to a study by the [Coalition for Higher Education Act Reform](#), at least 200,000 students have lost aid due to the provision.

No other criminal offense results in loss of financial aid for students, even rape or assault with a deadly weapon.

Last year, a bill by Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) to repeal the law in full -- the Removing Impediments to Students; Education (RISE) Act, [H.R. 1184](#), garnered 70 cosponsors.

This week in a "chairman to chairman" meeting between Rep. Barney Frank, who has championed repeal in House since 1999, and Rep. George Miller, who chairs the Education & Labor Committee CHEAR learned that the House education leadership has committed to including repeal of the Higher Education Act (HEA) drug provision in the upcoming HEA reauthorization bill.

For more information, check out the [CHEAR](#) or [Students for Sensible Drug Policy](#) web sites.

### **New Report Details Prison Rape of Drug Users**

From [DRCNet](#):

Sexual assaults on prisoners is an endemic problem in America, not an isolated one, the war on drugs is making the problem worse, and drug war prisoners are among those most likely to be victimized, according to a report released last Thursday.

The report, "[Stories from Inside: Prisoner Rape and the War on Drugs](#)," by the human rights group [Stop Prisoner Rape](#), calls prisoner rape "a human rights crisis of appalling magnitude."

According to the report authors, "[We] need to reduce the incarceration rate for people convicted of nonviolent drug offenses; we need to take treatment and diversion programs seriously and not automatically send everyone to prison."

### **Prestigious Medical Journal Calls for New Drug Classifications**

The British Medical Journal, *The Lancet*, has called for all drugs, legal and illegal, to be classified by the relative harm they cause than the schedules created by governing bodies, such as the United States Controlled Substances Act.

The study, [Development of a Rational Scale to Assess the Harms of Drugs of Potential Misuse](#), assessed the potential harms of the different drugs on three different scales: the physical harm to the user caused by the drug, the tendency of the drug to induce dependence, and the deleterious effects of drug use on families, community, and society.

The researchers found both alcohol and tobacco to be more harmful than marijuana or ecstasy. Heroin and cocaine topped the list as most harmful, followed by barbiturates, street methadone, and alcohol.

"Drug policy is primarily aimed at reducing the harm to individual users, their families and society," said Dr. Blakemore in a [statement accompanying the release of the study](#).

"But at present there is no rational, evidence-based method for assessing the harm of drugs...We hope that policy makers will take note of the fact that the resulting ranking of drugs differs substantially from their classification in the Misuse of Drugs Act and that alcohol and tobacco are judged more harmful than many illegal substances."

The order of ranking starting with the most harmful was: heroin, cocaine, barbiturates, street methadone, alcohol, ketamine, benzodiazepines, amphetamine, tobacco, buprenorphine, cannabis, solvents, 4-MTA, LSD, methylphenidate, anabolic steroids, GHB, ecstasy, alkyl nitrates, khat.

### **Wakarusa '07 - Privacy Rights in Public Places; ACLU forum**

April 25 at 7pm at the Lawrence Library sponsored by the [Douglas County ACLU](#) will present a panel discussion with Rick Frydman, attorney; Charles Branson, Douglas County District Attorney; DPFKS Executive Director Laura Green; Lt. Kari Wempe of the Douglas County Sheriff's Department; and an ACLU Representative.

There will be a panel discussion and questions from the audience.

