

RESPONSE TO
QUESTION SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO
MICHAEL P. BOTTICELLI
ACTING DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY

FOLLOWING MAY 14, 2014, HEARING ENTITLED,
“AMERICA’S ADDICTION TO OPIOIDS: HEROIN AND PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE”
CAUCUS ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL
UNITED STATES SENATE

Question from Senator Tom Udall

What effect do you believe fully legalizing recreational marijuana, as Colorado and Washington states have done, will have on efforts to combat the crisis in opioid and heroin abuse?

ANSWER:

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) does not anticipate that actions taken regarding marijuana at the state level in Colorado and Washington state will have any effect on Federal efforts to address heroin and prescription drug abuse.

Increased unlawful access to substances that have adverse health consequences or abuse potential, such as marijuana, is contrary to a public health approach to drug policy. However, we do not believe state actions concerning marijuana will significantly affect the Federal Government’s responses to opioid and heroin abuse. Reducing opioid abuse and its consequences, such as infectious disease transmission, overdose, and death, is among the Administration’s top priorities.

The *National Drug Control Strategy* and its accompanying budget will continue to promote opium poppy eradication in source countries, heroin interdiction in the transit zone and at U.S. borders and ports of entry, and the disruption and dismantling of heroin trafficking organizations. The *Strategy* also will continue to emphasize reducing the misuse of prescription opioids by educating the public and prescribers on the potential health risks of these medications, monitoring the prescribing of these drugs, promoting proper disposal, and enhancing law enforcement efforts to reduce diversion of these drugs to the illicit market.

The *National Drug Control Strategy* will also continue to focus on preventing the initiation of drug use, which includes use of marijuana, heroin, and other illicit substances as well as misuse of prescription drugs. The *Strategy* will also emphasize the importance of ensuring access and availability of evidence-based treatment for substance use disorders and their consequences.