

STATEMENT BY THE WHITE HOUSE DRUG CZAR ABOUT THE U.S. SUPREME COURT'S DECISION REGARDING SO-CALLED MEDICAL MARIJUANA

(Washington, D.C.)-John Walters, Director of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), and President Bush's "Drug Czar," today issued the following statement regarding the United States Supreme Court's decision regarding so-called medical marijuana.

Director Walters said, "Today's decision marks the end of medical marijuana as a political issue. Our Nation has the highest standards and most sophisticated institutions in the world for determining the safety and effectiveness of medication. Our national medical system relies on proven scientific research, not popular opinion. To date, science and research have not determined that smoking a crude plant is safe or effective. We have a responsibility as a civilized society to ensure that the medicine Americans receive from their doctors is effective, safe, and free from the pro-drug politics that are being promoted in America under the guise of medicine.

Too many of our citizens suffer from pain and chronic illnesses. Smoking illegal drugs may make some people "feel better." However, civilized societies and modern day medical practices differentiate between inebriation and the safe, supervised delivery of proven medicine by legitimate doctors. In 1999, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) published a review of the available scientific evidence in an effort to assess the potential health benefits of marijuana and its constituent cannabinoids. The review concluded that smoking marijuana is not recommended for any long-term medical use, and a subsequent IOM report declared, "marijuana is not a modern medicine."

For years, pro-drug groups seeking the legalization of marijuana and other drugs have preyed on the compassion of Americans to promote their political agenda and bypass F.D.A.'s rigorous standards which have safeguarded our medical supply for over 100 years. Marinol - the synthetic form of THC and the psychoactive ingredient contained in marijuana - is already legally available for prescription by physicians whose patients suffer from pain and chronic illness."