

US reflects on the pros, cons of legal cannabis ahead of 420

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In this April 12, 2018, photo, Joy Hollingsworth, of the Hollingsworth Cannabis Company, poses for a photo, while holding a young marijuana plant in one of her company's pot growing facilities near Shelton, Wash. Hollingsworth family members own a marijuana farm south of Seattle, where they grow about 9,000 plants and employ 30 people at peak harvesting. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

America's marijuana supporters have a lot to celebrate on this 420

holiday: Thirty states have legalized some form of medical marijuana, according to a national advocacy group. Nine of those states and Washington, D.C., also have broad legalization where adults 21 and older can use pot for any reason. Michigan could become the 10th state with its ballot initiative this year.

Yet cannabis remains illegal under federal law, and it still has many opponents.

Here's a look at what some advocates and critics have to say about the state of marijuana in the U.S. today:

JOY HOLLINGSWORTH, SHELTON, WASHINGTON

Family owns a marijuana farm south of Seattle, where they grow about 9,000 plants and employ 30 [people](#) at peak harvesting.

WHERE WILL YOU MARK 420?

"I will be in Los Angeles, California, hanging out with some friends and some people who are interested in cannabis, and kind of learn the market and what is going on in California. And to celebrate that opportunity—their first 420 being a legal market."

WHAT DOES 420 MEAN TO YOU?

"The celebration of cannabis, not just recreationally but medicinally—the actual plant that has helped so many people—and just a day where people can come celebrate and kind of learn about the plant. It's a day where we all get together and vibe out on the celebration of this medicine."

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE STATE OF MARIJUANA IN

THE U.S.?

"I feel the industry is moving toward a good balance of small farmers and commercialization and a better, wide spread of the plant for people to be able to have access to it."



In this April 12, 2018, photo, Alex Martin, left, and Macrio Ahlon, right, load transplanted marijuana plants into a trailer as they work at the Hollingsworth Cannabis Company near Shelton, Wash. Hollingsworth family members own a marijuana farm south of Seattle, where they grow about 9,000 plants and employ 30 people at peak harvesting. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IT GO?

"I would like to see the cannabis industry go into people having more access to the plant so we'd be able to see the medical benefits to cannabis—not just inhaling it or eating it, but also being used as a

topical, as a salve, being able to have access to CBD because of all the wonderful things that this plant can offer medically."

DO YOU USE MARIJUANA? HOW DO YOU CONSUME IT?

"I use marijuana and cannabis every day in a CBD salve form, so a topical form."

LINCOLN FISH, SAN DIEGO

CEO of Outco Inc., a marijuana cultivator and wholesaler near El Cajon, California.

WHAT DOES 420 MEAN TO YOU?

"I often tell people it's a lot of fun. Seriously, can you think of another industry that owns a day of the year and a minute of the day? I mean, really—nobody else has anything like that, so it's pretty special. And I think it signifies everything we've all been fighting so hard for ... just the freedom and the awareness more than anything else."

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE STATE OF MARIJUANA IN THE U.S.?



In this April 12, 2018, photo, a marijuana plant awaits transplanting at the Hollingsworth Cannabis Company near Shelton, Wash. America's marijuana supporters have a lot to celebrate on this 420 holiday: Thirty states have legalized some form of medical marijuana, according to a national advocacy group. Nine of those states and Washington, D.C., also have broad legalization where adults 21 and older can use pot for any reason. Michigan could become the 10th state with its ballot initiative this year. Yet cannabis remains illegal under federal law, and it still has many opponents. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

"It's three steps forward, two steps back. We had some reasonably good news recently from the feds, and Trump says he's supporting medical, and as far as he's concerned, recreational is up to the states. That being said, you know, he might change his mind in a tweet tomorrow. So we need more protection than that, but I think it's going the right way. And I think that people should be pleased."

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IT GO?

"Where I'd like to see it go is for it to take its rightful place—certainly on the medical side, replacing some of these awful, horrible drugs that people are using. It can replace opioids in many, many situations, but we have a whole range of medical research to do on this that's never been able to be completed because of the silliness around it. On the recreational side, I want to see it take its rightful place right in there compared with ... alcohol and tobacco and so forth that people are using on a regular basis."

DO YOU USE MARIJUANA? HOW DO YOU CONSUME IT?

"Before I got involved in the industry, I didn't. In fact, I consider myself probably part of the problem. I didn't understand it well. I didn't know about all the hypocrisy, and I was a nerd in college. Now I use vapes. I'm not a good smoker. Even a cigarette—I take one puff, and I fall on the floor coughing. And I don't like edibles because of the delayed effects and the uncertainty. But certainly tinctures and vapes, I enjoy very much."

MIKE GRIFFIN, DULUTH, GEORGIA

Public affairs director for the Georgia Baptist Mission Board

WHAT DOES 420 MEAN TO YOU?

"It just means the potential of, if they're not careful, communicating some things about marijuana, ignoring some of the negative things and trying to have an impact ... of causing the industry to expand."



In this April 12, 2018, photo, a worker at the Hollingsworth Cannabis Company packages pre-rolled marijuana joints near Shelton, Wash. America's marijuana supporters have a lot to celebrate on this 420 holiday: Thirty states have legalized some form of medical marijuana, according to a national advocacy group. Nine of those states and Washington, D.C., also have broad legalization where adults 21 and older can use pot for any reason. Michigan could become the 10th state with its ballot initiative this year. Yet cannabis remains illegal under federal law, and it still has many opponents. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE STATE OF MARIJUANA IN THE U.S.?

"At Georgia Baptist, we represent about 1.4 million Georgians and about 3,600 churches. We're concerned ultimately about the fact that all the incremental steps that you're seeing throughout the United States—whether it's dealing with [medical marijuana](#) or cultivation—those types of things seem to be ultimately leading to

recreational use, which we believe is very dangerous for a society and that there has to be a balance between public health and safety versus personal responsibility. ...

"We're concerned that we're moving in a direction that's going to have a very negative societal impact on homes, on young people, on driving, crime—all those types of things that have a normal impact from alcohol or drug abuse is going to be accelerated with the legalization of marijuana."

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IT GO?

"The Georgia Baptist Mission Board, basically from a lobbying standpoint, takes a neutral position on medical marijuana. ... We recognize the right of those families to seek what they feel is the necessary remedy to some of the illnesses that especially children are facing. So we draw the line at the cultivation point. And the reason we do is because we passed a resolution a couple of years ago as a state convention concerned that cultivation will eventually lead to recreation."

HAVE YOU EVER USED MARIJUANA?

"No, I never have. I grew up as a young person, came to know Christ as my Lord and Savior when I was 14, just out of that conviction of serving the Lord. I have tasted alcohol, but I've never had anything to do with marijuana because (of) believing that Christians should not be involved in some type of mind-altering drug for recreational purposes."

KELLY PEREZ, DENVER

CEO and founder of kindColorado, which provides community engagement opportunities for the cannabis industry to be assets in communities.



In this April 16, 2018, photo, Kelly Perez, left, chief executive officer and founder of kindColorado, poses for a photo inside a cannabis dispensary in east Denver. kindColorado provides community engagement opportunities for the cannabis industry to be assets in communities. (AP Photo/David Zalubowski)

WHAT DOES 420 MEAN TO YOU?

"It's a celebration, and we still have work to do. The war on drugs has not ended; the negative impact on communities of color has not ended. So we still have work to do even though we're legal in Colorado. There are states surrounding us that aren't. And as long as one black or brown youth is arrested for possession, we still have our work to do. So, what would you call it? A measured celebration."

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE STATE OF MARIJUANA IN

THE U.S.?

"It's an incredibly exciting time. There's so much opportunity, but we really do want to keep our roots in change and the people's liberation and reforming criminal justice and moving the legalization conversation forward but not forgetting those social justice issues."

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IT GO?

"I want legalization to continue to be self-reflective and continue moving forward so that no one is arrested for cannabis possession. But also that we are having opportunities for people to enter this legal industry, especially folks who have been impacted by the war on drugs. ... We haven't done what we need to do for an industry built on the backs of black and brown and sick people. We have to continue to uplift those messages and be activists around that space."

DO YOU USE MARIJUANA? HOW DO YOU CONSUME IT?

"There is a brand that has a tincture that is very high CBD, low THC. ... It's a dropper that I'll put a little bit in my drink. And not drive—that's super important. That's not very strong actually, but you need to be very careful about the way you consume."

BILL DOWNING, READING, MASSACHUSETTS



In this April 12, 2018, photo, Joy Hollingsworth, of the Hollingsworth Cannabis Company, poses for a photo in one of her company's pot growing facilities near Shelton, Wash. Hollingsworth family members own a marijuana farm south of Seattle, where they grow about 9,000 plants and employ 30 people at peak harvesting. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

Owner of CBD Please, which offers nutritional products made from hemp; co-founder and former president of the Massachusetts Cannabis Reform Coalition.

WHERE WILL YOU MARK 420?

"I will probably smoke some marijuana at some point during the day. ... It would be nice if I could take the day off, but I can smoke marijuana any time I want. The thrill of being in a big crowd of people smoking marijuana has kind of faded for me a bit."

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE STATE OF MARIJUANA IN THE U.S.?

"It's improving rapidly, and this is ... something that has been building for decades. If you look at national poll results for the question, 'Should cannabis be legalized for adult use?' you'll realize it has been rising in popularity and is now well over 50 percent by most polls. This is a very long-term trend, and it has to do with people understanding cannabis, understanding how safe or unsafe it is relative to recreational drugs, and people understanding that it is relatively very, very safe compared with other recreational drugs."

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IT GO?

"I'd like to see the federal government become less obstinate in many ways. I'd like to see them step out of the path of progress for marijuana legalization and for the development of the hemp industry."

DO YOU USE MARIJUANA? HOW DO YOU CONSUME IT?

"I use it for both medical and recreational purposes. I find it to be very, very effective. I have some medical issues I am dealing with and, boy, without cannabis I would probably be taking some very dangerous pharmaceutical drugs."



In this April 16, 2018, photo, Kelly Perez, left, chief executive officer and founder of kindColorado, and Courtney Mathis, the organization's president and founder, pose for a photo inside a cannabis dispensary in east Denver. kindColorado provides community engagement opportunities for the cannabis industry to be assets in communities. (AP Photo/David Zalubowski)

"For recreational purposes, I am smoking it. For my medical purposes, I am using creams and tinctures and oils and things that go under your tongue."

JIM HARTMAN, GENOA, NEVADA

Former San Francisco Bay Area lawyer who now lives in Nevada and serves as chairman of Nevadans for Responsible Drug Policy; helped write the opposition argument to legalizing marijuana that appeared on the state ballot two years ago.

WHAT DOES 420 MEAN TO YOU?

"I respect people's ability and right to celebrate the fact of marijuana and marijuana's legalization in various areas. But (I'm) not a particular fan myself."

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE STATE OF MARIJUANA IN THE U.S.?

"I think Americans are pretty divided on the subject of marijuana in terms of what it all means. I think people would like to see it decriminalized. They would like to see it regulated. They would like to see it taxed. But all of the initiatives that have been on the ballot really don't do those things.

"What we have in the United States is a commercialization of marijuana that I think is very, very dangerous. A profit motive is going to drive it, and the early experience in states like Colorado—you have a youth increase in marijuana use, DUIs, homelessness, crime, a long list of ... problems that come with commercialization.

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IT GO?



In this April 12, 2018, photo, nugs of marijuana await packaging at the Hollingsworth Cannabis Company near Shelton, Wash. America's marijuana supporters have a lot to celebrate on this 420 holiday: Thirty states have legalized some form of medical marijuana, according to a national advocacy group. Nine of those states and Washington, D.C., also have broad legalization where adults 21 and older can use pot for any reason. Michigan could become the 10th state with its ballot initiative this year. Yet cannabis remains illegal under federal law, and it still has many opponents. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

"We are on an upscale or upside, where there will be an increasing number of states that may legalize it. Over time, I think people will begin to get the picture that this isn't a progressive, positive thing, but it has a lot of deleterious effects that will be seen in later years. ... As a kid, I remember getting on airplanes where there was a smoking section. We have come over a 30- or 40-year period recognizing that, 'Boy, that really wasn't where we should be going.' I think the same thing will happen with marijuana."

HAVE YOU EVER USED MARIJUANA?

"Not to any significant amount. I would say my early experience with marijuana in high school, I went to Berkeley High School at a time when marijuana was just kind of coming of age in the mid-'60s and actually saw the deleterious effects among classmates of mine—a very good friend who got very caught up in the whole thing. It became an obsession with him as to where to buy it, where to grow it, and it took over his life. I think that is unfortunate, where kids didn't fully achieve, didn't fully succeed where they could have had they not got caught up in the whole marijuana movement."

STEPHANIE HORINE, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

Grew up around [marijuana](#) as the daughter of a Steve Miller Band roadie; now works for a small nonprofit and helps with Elementa, a women's group promoting wellness and cannabis.

WHERE WILL YOU MARK 420?

"I have to work obviously on the Friday so I'll probably just be at home. Maybe I'll stop at a newly opened dispensary and pick up something to enjoy. However, on Saturday we'll be doing a cooking class with cannabis ... so that's really where we will really be celebrating, on 4/21."

WHAT DOES 420 MEAN TO YOU?

"420 has been like an unspoken taboo for many years, but it was always code that, 'It's after work. Is it 420? Time to have your medicine.' So, that's what 420 means to me."



In this Monday, April 16, 2018, photo, products sit in a case inside Ground Swell cannabis dispensary in east Denver. America's marijuana supporters have a lot to celebrate on this 420 holiday: Thirty states have legalized some form of medical marijuana, according to a national advocacy group. Nine of those states and Washington, D.C., also have broad legalization where adults 21 and older can use pot for any reason. Michigan could become the 10th state with its ballot initiative this year. Yet cannabis remains illegal under federal law, and it still has many opponents. (AP Photo/David Zalubowski)

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE STATE OF MARIJUANA IN THE U.S.?

"I believe that it's a long time coming that the states are being able to legalize a natural plant that was put here for our use. I think that it's going to take a little while, but the groundswell's here. And, I mean, there's so much black market that they might as well be cashing in and helping society with it as well."

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IT GO?

"I feel like [cannabis](#) should be a mainstream topic, and we should all be aware of it. I wish the stigma would go away. I think that over time, again, as we educate folks and people become more interested in it, I think it will just keep growing, and I want to be a part of that."

DO YOU USE MARIJUANA? HOW DO YOU CONSUME IT?

"Yes, I currently do. I have chronic illnesses, and I've also learned about the powers of CBD as well. And so I use it in different forms, whichever I need and whatever I can come up with."



In this April 12, 2018, photo, Joy Hollingsworth, of the Hollingsworth Cannabis Company, checks on a young marijuana plant near Shelton, Wash. Hollingsworth family members own a marijuana farm south of Seattle, where they grow about 9,000 plants and employ 30 people at peak harvesting. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

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