Politics is riddled with landmines; even the most basic of topics are readily debated. With the ongoing drug wars in Mexico and believed rise of abuse in the US, our politicians are faced with difficult decisions, one being the legalization of certain illicit substances, such as Marijuana. This topic brings both politicians and citizens into heated battles in the moral, legal, and economic realms. In the midst of a presidential election this topic has been thrown around in several forms, but no real solutions have been proposed.

From a moral standpoint the legalization of marijuana has torn society apart. Some people believe that politics and morality should be separate, stating that it isn't the government's job to decide what is morally right for society. On the other hand there is a group that believes that it is the governments job to protect its people, even from a moral standpoint. Personally I believe that the government shouldn't be able to make a decision for people on an individual level, but on the level of society as a whole. As someone who has never used, it may be expected that I would be in opposition of the legalization, but in reality I am quite the contrary. Much scientific evidence shows that the ill effects of marijuana are actually less than those of alcohol, and even cigarettes. From the side of morality, the effect on society will be minimal enough based on this evidence that I believe a decision cannot be made as it would more so affect individuals than society as a whole.

Legalizing drugs in general may be ill advised, but when it comes to one of the most frequented drugs worldwide, one should stand back and look at the broad picture. This debate isn't localized to the US or North America as many would like to believe, it is a global battle of the opinions. Many countries have had free use policies in place for years, and believe it or not several states, most notably California, have already made a movement to legalize the use of weed. These laws that are supposed to be preventing the use of the drug arguably do the opposite. Some studies say that by banning something it makes people want to use (and possibly abuse) it more than they typically would. The other side says that your typical citizen will abide by the law and refrain from usage. You may be wondering which side is correct, and the answer is both. Every person is different, some get a thrill out of "breaking the rules" while others fear the repercussions of doing such and abide. From my personal experience, people will do what they feel is right for them, whether publically, or in private where no one will be the wiser. Because of this I will look to the facts. In Portugal, legislation passed that legalized specific categories of drugs. Initially a surge was seen where there were many new users entering into this questionable market, but after the initial shock the numbers turned around. Existing users seemed to stay fairly steady, but the introduction of new users declined dramatically. Why you ask? It is thought that the thrill of being caught doing something illegal drives the younger generations to try questionable activities. In addition to this, programs to educate the public about the use of such drugs were put in place, similarly to how alcohol and sex are handled in the US. Included in these programs are easily accessible rehab centers for those who want to break the habit.

Possibly one of the greatest incentives for legalizing the use of pot is the revenue that could be generated. Nationwide, taxing the use of cannabis could potentially help offset a large part of our national debt. In California alone it is estimated that through the process of legalizing and taxing marijuana the state will be able to bring in as much as $1 billion annually. Let's say that every other state brings in half of that amount, as a nation tax revenue alone would be approximately $25.5 billion annually. In addition, the current enforcement programs could be minimized to a level where it is equal to that of alcohol. Prisons across the country are full of convicts who were detained for using the substance. These people will continually eat up valuable tax dollars as the prisons aren't free to operate. Overall, the cost of legalizing marijuana would bring in a net profit through decreased enforcement costs and a colossal surge in tax revenue.

Being someone who has never used drugs it may surprise some to find that I am in fact an advocate for the legalization of cannabis. From negligible adverse health effects to massive economic gains everything points to 'yes'! If politicians leave personal opinion out of the battle and look at the cold hard facts it is hard to not be an advocate. Sure there are pros and cons to the subject, but are they really that much different from alcohol and cigarettes?