

Fake News, the Tail Wags the Dog?

Has Fake News inspired legislation?

Justin Whitlock



Has fake news had an impact on legislation?

The Atlantic

Popular

Latest

Section

POLITICS

A Triumph of Misinformation

Most of what everyone "knows" about the demise of health-care reform is probably wrong—and, more important, so are the vague impressions people have of what was really in Hillary Clinton's plan

JAMES FALLOWS JANUARY 1995 ISSUE

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By the time the Clinton health-care plan was unveiled, everyone knew how terrible it was. The Clinton team that knew a lot about policy and politics had wasted time and missed a deadline after deadline for presenting the plan to Congress, causing the plan to miss its best opportunity for passage—during the President's brief honeymoon period, in 1993. The scheme was fatally overcomplicated. The proposed legislation, 1,342 pages long, was hard for congressmen to read and impossible for anyone except the plan's creators, Hillary Rodham Clinton and Ira C. Magaziner, to understand.

But suppose that what everyone knows is wrong. This happens all the time in politics. Barely a year ago, for example, everyone in Washington knew that Congress was absolutely certain to pass a health-care program by now. The leaders of the Administration's health-care-reform effort, Hillary Clinton and Magaziner, believe that everyone is wrong again now. I heard them elaborate



Fake News Peddler Claims Undue Influence, 2016



7:33

+ QUEUE

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THE INDUSTRY

We Tracked Down A Fake-News Creator In The Suburbs. Here's What We Learned

November 23, 2016 · 3:31 PM ET
Heard on [All Things Considered](#)



LAURA SYDELL



He was amazed at how quickly fake news could spread and how easily people believe it. He wrote one fake story for [NationalReport.net](#) about how customers in Colorado marijuana shops were [using food stamps to buy pot](#).

"What that turned into was a state representative in the House in Colorado [proposing actual legislation](#) to prevent people from using their food stamps to buy marijuana based on something that had just never happened," Coler says.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/11/23/503146770/npr-finds-the-head-of-a-covert-fake-news-operation-in-the-suburbs>



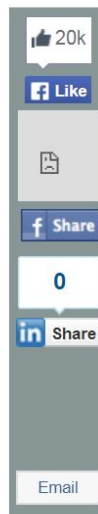
Original Article: NationalReport.net Captured 22 Jan 14, posted 3 weeks prior



HOME » BUSINESS » COLORADO POT SHOP ACCEPTING FOOD STAMPS – TAXPAYER FUNDED MARIJUANA FOR WELFARE RECIPIENTS

Colorado Pot Shop Accepting Food Stamps – Taxpayer Funded Marijuana for Welfare Recipients

Posted about 3 weeks ago | 76 comments



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Includes a link to a Fake Pot Dispensary

INTERNET ARCHIVE
WayBackMachine

<http://ritegreenspotshop.com/> Go DEC JAN 22 AUG 2013 2014 2015 About

31 captures
8 Jan 2014 - 21 Dec 2018

RITE GREENS


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Federal Agents raided Rite Greens Pot Shop over the weekend following false accusations that we were selling marijuana that was turning users gay. We will be reopening shortly.

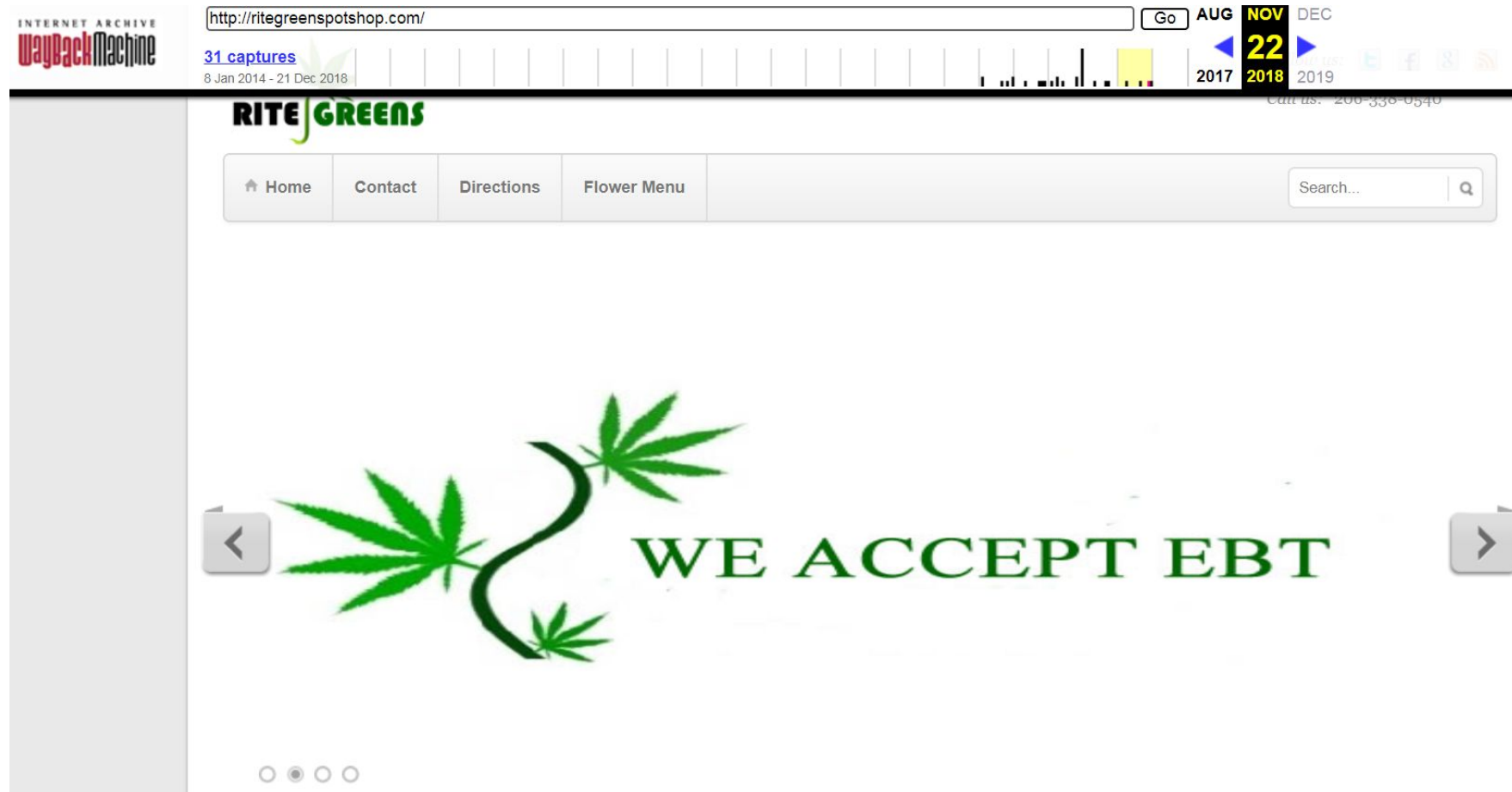
“ *Excellent supply and quality products. Great green atmosphere and the best.* ”

 Bobby TwoTone

<https://web.archive.org/web/20140122120630/http://ritegreenspotshop.com/>



Still up in 2018, Now with scrolling photos!



<https://web.archive.org/web/20181122140325/http://ritegreenspotshop.com/>



Carbon Dating Nat. Report Birthday 03 January 2014

<http://nationalreport.net/colorado-pot-shop-accept-food-stamps-taxpayer-funded-marijuana/>
<http://carbodate.cs.odu.edu/#http://nationalreport.net/colorado-pot-shop-accept-food-stamps-taxpayer-funded-marijuana/>

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https://twitter.com/Snow_Mexican/status/419349095417790464




Snopes Immediately Debunks the Article

<https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/brownie-points/>



Claim: A store in Colorado accepts food stamps towards the purchase of food items containing marijuana.

 **FALSE**

Example: *[Collected via e-mail, January 2014]*

Is there a pot shop in Colorado that is taking food stamps for food items containing marijuana?

<https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/brownie-points/>



Carbon Date Snopes Birthday 03 January 14

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<http://carbondate.cs.odu.edu/#https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/brownie-points/>



Despite Snopes, Posted without source by Far Right Blog

captured 7 Jan 14, posted 2 days prior

INTERNET ARCHIVE
Wayback Machine

14
Headline: Taliban Strap Suicide Vest to Eight-Year-Old Girl 4 hours ago

http://conservativefrontline.com/colorado-pot-shop-accept-food-stamps-taxpayer-funded-marijuana-welfare-recipients/ Go DEC JAN FEB 07 2014 2015

18 captures
7 Jan 2014 - 3 Apr 2017

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Colorado Pot Shop to Accept Food Stamps – Taxpayer Funded Marijuana for Welfare Recipients

Posted about 2 days ago | 5 comments



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Benjamin Braselussen for CNN

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<http://carbodate.cs.odu.edu/#http://conservativefrontline.com/colorado-pot-shop-accept-food-stamps-taxpayer-funded-marijuana-welfare-recipients/>



Then Picked up by DailyDose Captured 15 Jan 14, posted 6 Jan 14



31 captures
15 Jan 2014 - 14 Mar 2018

<http://gopthedailydose.com/2014/01/06/colorado-pot-shop-accept-food-stamps-taxpayer-funded-marijuana-welfare-recipients-2> Go DEC JAN MAR 15 2014 2015


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Colorado Pot Shop to Accept Food Stamps – Taxpayer Funded Marijuana for Welfare Recipients

Posted on [6 January, 2014](#) by [Dylan](#)



[Conservative Frontline](#)- As of January 1st, 2014, Colorado became the first state in the nation to allow adults aged 21 or older to purchase and use marijuana for recreational use. The decision has led to excessively large lines at pot shops across the state and store owners reportedly surpassed \$1 million in

The Wound Project



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Carbon Date Daily Dose Birthday 06 January 14

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<http://carbodate.cs.odu.edu/#http://gopthedailydose.com/2014/01/06/colorado-pot-shop-accept-food-stamps-taxpayer-funded-marijuana-welfare-recipients-2/>



The article was then posted by the local GOP, 7 Jan 2014



<https://twitter.com/DougCOGOP/status/420546464331218944>

10 Jan 2010, Bill drops to Ban EBT use at Dispensaries

The Gazette
PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING JOURNALISM. EST. 1872

Food stamps at marijuana shops banned under Colorado bill

By: KRISTEN WYATT, Associated Press Jan 10, 2014



Caption +

DENVER — Food stamps for a pot brownie? It's an urban myth in Colorado, but state lawmakers want to make sure that doesn't happen.

A bill proposed this week by several Republicans would add marijuana dispensaries to liquor stores, gun shops and casinos as places where recipients of public assistance payments and food stamps can't use their electronic benefits cards to access cash.

There haven't been any reports of public EBT cards being used at marijuana dispensaries. But lawmakers say pot shops should be added to the law to make clear it's not legal.



https://gazette.com/news/food-stamps-at-marijuana-shops-banned-under-colorado-bill/article_dfcl511a-7d27-5c4b-97a0-8c20e5f46bb0.html




13 Jan, DailyKaos points out the coincidence (trustworthy source?)

Kos Media LLC [US] | <https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2014/01/13/1269341/-Fake-news-story-apparently-prompts-real-legislation-in-Colorado>

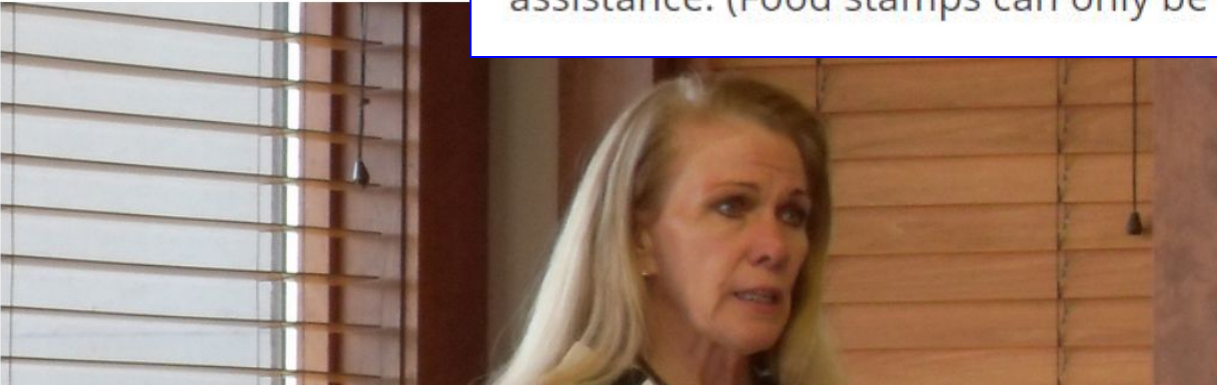
NEWS COMMUNITY ACTION Search

Fake news story apparently prompts real legislation in Colorado

 **Laura Clawson**
Daily Kos Staff

Monday January 13, 2014 · 1:38 PM EST

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A story from a fake news website has apparently led the Colorado Republican state senator who **thinks** fried chicken causes black and Latino poverty to **file a bill** prohibiting the use of food stamps or other government aid at marijuana dispensaries, even to purchase things that could be legally obtained elsewhere with the public assistance. (Food stamps can only be used to buy food, remember.)

<https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2014/01/13/1269341/-Fake-news-story-apparently-prompts-real-legislation-in-Colorado>



Carbon Date DailyKaos Birthday 13 Jan 2014

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<http://carbodate.cs.odu.edu/#https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2014/01/13/1269341/-Fake-news-story-apparently-prompts-real-legislation-in-Colorado>



14 January 14, Denver Post Debunks the controversy

DP

Fake report about Colorado pot shops, food...



Marijuana edibles like this brownie are for sale at Ganja Gourmet in Denver.

By LYNN BARTELS | The Denver Post

PUBLISHED: January 14, 2014 at 1:04 am | UPDATED: April 27, 2016 at 8:41 pm

The faux report about Colorado pot shops was produced by The National Report, which claims “Any resemblance to the truth is purely coincidental.” Last week, the publication wrote about “taxpayer funded marijuana for welfare recipients.” At least two conservative publications touted what they thought was a real story, as did the Douglas County GOP,

Sen. Vicki Marble of Fort Collins began working on her bill in August.

She produced an e-mail dated Sept. 4 from one of the legislature’s attorneys, who was writing her bill.

“Attached please find a draft of your bill that expands the places where recipients may not use the food stamp benefit cards to cover marijuana stores and strip clubs,” the drafter wrote.



125 tweets over two year period ending 2 Nov 2015

Home Moments Notifications Messages

colorado-pot-shop-accept-food-stamps-taxpayer-funded-marijuana

colorado-pot-shop-accept-food-stamps-taxpayer-funded-marijuana

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Fugate Santoro @Fugatehff · 2 Nov 2015
Colorado Pot Shop to Accept Food Stamps
Welfare Recipients via @

Deplorable Debb @ananya3959 · 5 Apr 2015
Colorado Pot Shop to Accept Food Stamps
Welfare Recipients fb.me/6iP2UiXG1

mzee26 @mzee26 · 5 Apr 2015
Colorado Pot Shop to Accept Food Stamps
Welfare Recipients gopthedailydose.com/201

JUNE GIBSON @ejune38 · 5 Apr 2015
Colorado Pot Shop to Accept Food Stamps
Welfare Recipients gopthedailydose.com/201

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Trends for you · Change

- #KeepRising
Rise Above in a Cadillac SUV
Promoted by Cadillac
- #AFilmThatDidntGoToOscars
8,517 Tweets
- Harry Reid
'I wish every day for a George Bush again,' Harry Reid tells CNN
- #MondayMotivation
Discovery, U.S. Navy, and 1 more are Tweeting about this
- Black Panther
Marvel Studios nabs their first Oscars win with Black Panther

JUNE GIBSON @ejune38 · 5 Apr 2015
Colorado Pot Shop to Accept Food Stamps – Taxpayer Funded Marijuana for Welfare Recipients gopthedailydose.com/2014/01/06/col... via @

Christi Painter @dubyagirl · 25 Jul 2014
Colorado Pot Shop to Accept Food Stamps – Taxpayer Funded Marijuana for Welfare Recipients j.mp/WSFcGK

joe ivanoff @joeivanoff · 22 Jan 2014
Colorado Pot Shop to Accept Food Stamps - Taxpayer Funded Marijuana for Welfare Recipients ... fb.me/2MwF27DaV

Victor @vyee80 · 21 Jan 2014
Colorado Pot Shop to Accept Food Stamps - Taxpayer Funded Marijuana for

<https://twitter.com/search?f=tweets&q=colorado-pot-shop-accept-food-stamps-taxpayer-funded-marijuana&src=typd>



Stopped counting at 200 tweets, Still popping up 2yrs on

Home Moments Notifications Messages Fake-news-

Fake-news-story-apparently-prompts-real-legislation-in-Colorado

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 **Bennett Morton** @Bennet... [Follow](#)

 **Judith** @cheddytaddy · 7 Oct 2016
Fake news story apparently prompts real legislation in Colorado
[dailykos.com/story/2014/1/1...](#)

 **Ken Connell** @KenConnell3 · 23 Sep 2016
Fake news story apparently prompts real legislation in Colorado
[dailykos.com/story/2014/1/1...](#)

 **Deeds Resists** @Dunia_Deeds · 9 Mar 2016
Fake news story apparently prompts real legislation in Colorado
[dailykos.com/story/2014/1/1...](#)

 **HBO** @HBO · Feb 11

<https://twitter.com/search?f=tweets&q=Fake-news-story-apparently-prompts-real-legislation-in-Colorado&src=typd>

Legislation was not passed that year

INTERNET ARCHIVE
Wayback Machine

2 captures
17 Mar 2018 - 18 Mar 2018

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17
2018 2019

Conference Voices Support for Bill to Protect Those With Traditional Views on Marriage

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POLITICS & POLICY

Welfare Cash for Weed in Colorado

By JILLIAN KAY MELCHIOR | July 22, 2014 8:00 AM

Facebook Twitter Email Print



High Times (Dreamstime)

Last session, some Colorado legislators attempted to pass a bill banning TANF withdrawals at marijuana establishments, but Democrats blocked it. The state's Republicans did succeed, however, in passing a budget amendment that would preclude such use. Because of a legislative technicality, however, the amendment "doesn't have the power and teeth behind it that a statute does," says Colorado Springs representative Dan Nordberg, one of the key proponents of the ban. Republican lawmakers plan to re-introduce stronger legislation next session.

COMMENTS

Recipients are withdrawing thousands in cash at pot dispensaries, and Republicans want to stop it.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20180317010151/https://www.nationalreview.com/2014/07/welfare-cash-weed-colorado-jillian-kay-melchior/>

It was passed the following year.

<https://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/politics/hickenlooper-signs-law-banning-use-of-ebt-cards-at-pot-shops-and-strip-clubs-in-colorado> APR **MAY** JUL
8 captures Sections ▾ Weather ▾ Traffic ▾
3 May 2015 - 28 Dec 2017 2014 **03** 2015 2017

Hickenlooper signs law banning use of EBT cards at pot shops and strip clubs in Colorado

POSTED: 2:12 PM, May 1, 2015

TAG: [john hickenlooper](#) | [electronic benefits cards](#) | [ebt cards](#)



Gov. John Hickenlooper signed two bills Friday to add marijuana businesses and strip clubs to the list of Colorado businesses where electronic benefits cards -- called EBTs -- can't be used to withdraw cash.

Liquor stores, casinos and gun shops already have such limitations. Marijuana industry groups and the state agency that administers welfare supported the welfare limit.

Previous attempts to forbid use of the cards in pot shops failed because of concerns that the pot-shop ATMs may be closer than banks in some neighborhoods. But opposition evaporated this year after numerous reports of the benefits cards being used in marijuana dispensaries.

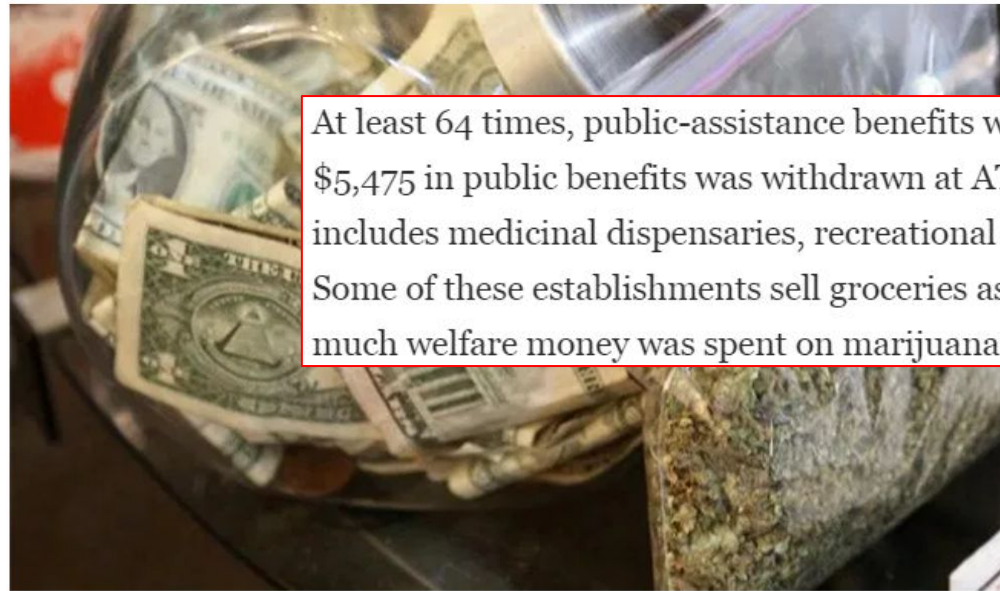
Someone went and looked at actual data



POLITICS & POLICY

Welfare Money Goes to Pot In Colorado

By JILLIAN KAY MELCHIOR | February 24, 2014 3:08 PM



At least 64 times, public-assistance benefits were accessed at businesses selling marijuana. A total of \$5,475 in public benefits was withdrawn at ATMs in establishments that sell pot. This figure includes medicinal dispensaries, recreational stores, and at least one place that combines the two. Some of these establishments sell groceries as well as pot, so there is no way to know exactly how much welfare money was spent on marijuana.

Thousands of dollars in public withdrawn at marijuana-shop ATMs.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20180712103241/https://www.nationalreview.com/2014/02/welfare-money-goes-pot-colorado-jillian-kay-melchior/>



So... what happened?

- Initial fake story lost traction when the real story involving ATMs was introduced.
- The false story about the fake story continued to make the rounds because nothing better came along.
 - False False story pops up in a rash of retweets about every 6 months.

The screenshot displays a Twitter thread with three columns of tweets. The central column is highlighted with a red border, while the left and right columns are outlined in blue. All tweets in the thread share the same text: "Fake news story apparently prompts real legislation in Colorado" followed by a link to a Daily Kos article. The tweets are from various users, including @Mason8777, @dmcrane, @rinkui, @sittinonmyhands, @Timesmithing, @TessatTys, @Auxi13Sheila, @Mikew1767, and @mgck59. The dates range from April 2015 to March 2016. Each tweet includes icons for replies, retweets, and likes, with some showing numerical counts (e.g., 1 reply, 1 retweet, 1 like).

Left Column (Blue Outline):

- nosamnod** @Mason8777 · 7 Mar 2016
Fake news story apparently prompts real legislation in Colorado
dailykos.com/story/2014/1/1/...
- dmcrane** @dmcrane · 6 Mar 2016
Fake news story apparently prompts real legislation in Colorado
dailykos.com/story/2014/1/1/...
- Bhavna Saxena** @rinkui · 6 Mar 2016
Fake news story apparently prompts real legislation in Colorado
ln.is/m.dailykos.com/...

Center Column (Red Outline):

- Maria** @sittinonmyhands · 22 Aug 2015
Fake news story apparently prompts real legislation in Colorado
dailykos.com/story/2014/01/... via @dailykos
- Misty Day** @Timesmithing · 22 Aug 2015
Fake news story apparently prompts real legislation in Colorado
dailykos.com/story/2014/01/...
- Theresa Mullen** @TessatTys · 22 Aug 2015
Fake news story apparently prompts real legislation in Colorado
m.dailykos.com/story/2014/01/...

Right Column (Blue Outline):

- sheilamonge** @Auxi13Sheila · 6 Apr 2015
Fake news story apparently prompts real legislation in Colorado
dailykos.com/story/2014/01/... via @dailykos
- Michael** @Mikew1767 · 6 Apr 2015
Fake news story apparently prompts real legislation in Colorado
dailykos.com/story/2014/01/... via @dailykos/ SHE IS A REAL NUT JOB & A REPUBLICAN
- Mgck59** @mgck59 · 6 Apr 2015
Fake news story apparently prompts real legislation in Colorado
m.dailykos.com/story/2014/01/...



But I really really want it to be true...

- Fake news indirectly may have impacted whether legislation passed

We've tried to do similar things to liberals. It just has never worked, it never takes off. You'll get debunked within the first two comments and then the whole thing just kind of fizzles out. ~Jestin Coler

- Liberals may not be as impervious as implied above.
(Taken from NPR interview with Fake News purveyor)



<https://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/11/23/503146770/npr-finds-the-head-of-a-covert-fake-news-operation-in-the-suburbs>

<https://twitter.com/dawndash/status/423163610802573312>

<https://twitter.com/DougCOGOP/status/438350935295680512>