

Colombia Legalizes Medical Cannabis

Colombia, the South American nation long associated with cocaine trafficking and high-quality outdoor weed, has announced plans to legalize cannabis for medical and scientific purposes.

President Juan Manuel Santos confirmed that he would sign an executive decree authorizing a regulated medical marijuana program in the country—everything from cultivation, licensing, and sales to the eventual export of medi-pot products to other nations where their use is legal, such as Canada. The scientific-research provision is a key component of the decree, since it will expand the understanding and utilization of cannabinoids in treating disease; meanwhile, allowing medicinal use will benefit, among others, the estimated 400,000 Colombians suffering from epilepsy.

Under current law, Colombians are allowed to possess small amounts of *any* narcotic for personal use, but those court rulings have never been officially sanctioned by the federal government.

Illinois Begins Sales of MMJ after Two Year Wait

Illinois has implemented its long-delayed medical pot program in earnest, with the first legal sales taking place on November 9, 2015—more than two years after lawmakers approved the plant for medicinal use. Despite the lengthy wait, patients in Illinois are thrilled to finally have legal access to cannabis medicine. Nineteen-year-old Chris Favela, who suffers from multiple sclerosis, was one of the first to purchase state-sanctioned marijuana in Illinois. Although the prices are high—nine grams run \$180 at the EarthMed dispensary in Addison—Favela is happy for the relief. “[Cannabis] soothes the muscle stiffness and makes you feel a lot better,” he explained.

Only six of the 60 dispensaries planned for the state were open for the first day of legal sales, and there are no pot shops operating in Chicago, where the first dispensaries are expected to open in early 2016. To date, Illinois has registered just 3,300 patients statewide.

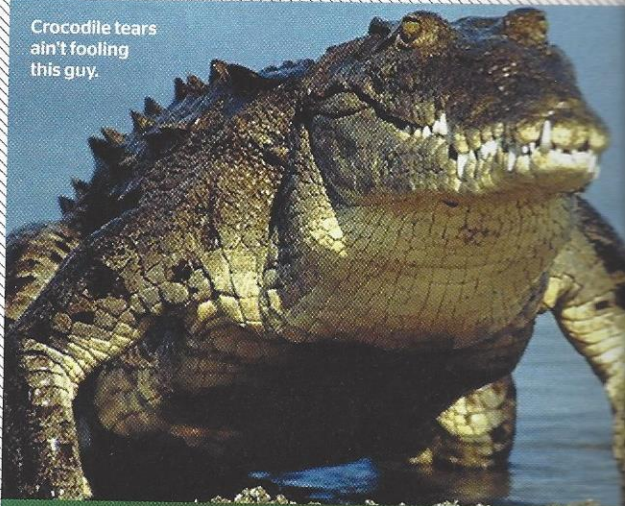
MARIJUANA FOR METABOLISM



A new study published in the *American Journal of Medicine* suggests that current consumers of cannabis are 54 percent less likely to suffer metabolic syndrome—a cluster of conditions that increase the risk of deadly heart disease, stroke and diabetes—compared to those who have never used pot.

Researchers at the University of Miami School of Medicine, analyzing the responses of people ages 20 to 59 in the 2005 to 2010 National Health and Nutritional Examination Surveys, discovered that less than 14 percent of current pot smokers met the criteria for metabolic syndrome, while nearly 20 percent of those who never used weed were candidates for it. Pot smokers also had lower fasting glucose levels and smaller waist circumferences compared to non-tokers. So light up and live longer!

Crocodile tears ain't fooling this guy.



Croc Block

Indonesia is really serious about drugs—or at least about scaring the crap out of drug users. The country's latest extreme measure against offenders? Using friggin' crocodiles to guard an island prison holding people sentenced to death on drug convictions.

The man behind the death-row croc-prison-guard scheme is no other than National Narcotics Agency chief Budi Waseso, who seems to take a sadistic joy in the idea, telling reporters: “We will place as many crocodiles as we can there. I will search for the most ferocious type of crocodile.”

Waseso's rationale for using crocodiles is that, unlike corruptible human guards, the deadly reptiles can't be bribed. Oh, and just in case anyone thought he was joking, Waseso later confirmed that not only does he intend to fill the prison's moat with up to 1,000 crocodiles, he's also considering placing tigers outside the grounds and stocking the waters surrounding the island with flesh-eating piranhas.

Just say no... to going to Indonesia.

Pot Pays for Higher Education

The cultural and societal benefits of legal cannabis are profound. And now, thanks to voters in Pueblo, Colorado, legal pot is contributing to higher education.

The residents of Pueblo approved a historically unprecedented ballot measure that would provide a college scholarship to all high-school graduates from the city or county of Pueblo beginning in 2017. The initiative passed resoundingly, with 60 percent of the vote, and proposes a 5 percent excise tax on commercial cannabis cultivation in Pueblo County. At least 50 percent of that revenue would then be placed in a cash fund for scholarships, which would allow new high-school graduates to attend any public college or university in the country.

The remaining excise money is earmarked for a number of exciting projects, including an innovative Medical Marijuana Academic Research grant. Depending on the revenue raised, the program could be expanded after 2017.

Colorado creates America's first pot scholarship.

