

Most crimes include drugs

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America has been fighting the infamous “War on Drugs” for over forty years. With illegal drug use running rampant in urban, suburban and rural centers alike, and drug-related violence escalating in countries known for manufacturing drugs that are shipped to the U.S., it is clear that our strategy for this war has not been a good one. It’s time for a new tactic, one that decreases drug use. By lowering the demand for drugs, we reduce drug-related crimes and play a part in curtailing the violent drug wars raging in the Caribbean and South America.

A recent study revealed that, at the time of their arrest, nearly 4,000 men in ten cities tested positive for an illegal substances. In some cities, like Chicago and Sacramento, a great majority of the men sampled were substance abusers. The results confirm what we have known for some time: there is a clear and distinct link between drug use and criminal behavior.

Now that this has, once again, been supported, what should America do to prevent drug use? For starters, more drug treatment centers need to be opened and existing ones need better funding. Less of an emphasis needs to be placed on incarcerating individuals with drug addictions, while more attention needs to be focused on making sure they get the help they need. Treatment centers are cheaper alternative than jail and far less of a burden on taxpayers and society as a whole.

Far too few prisons in this country focus on rehabilitating offenders and, unfortunately, illegal drugs are often readily accessible to inmates. As a result, many who go to jail for their drug related crimes are still addicted upon release. They return to their old lives, committing crime to feed their addiction. It’s a vicious cycle; one that is not only expensive but also detrimental to families and communities.

We’ve been fighting this war in the wrong way for far too long. With a new director, one who supports treatment and rehabilitation, heading the country’s office of drug control policy, we have an opportunity to reverse the cycle of incarceration that plagues many addicts. With proper treatment, drug addicted individuals are give the tools they need to overcome their dependency. Reducing the amount of drug addicted persons creates less demand for drugs. With less demand comes less drug trafficking and less drug-related criminal activity. Using this strategy, we win on all fronts.