

Age of Aquarius COMMUNITY COMMENT Mike Goldsby Jan. 11, 2018

When the Moon is in the Seventh House and Jupiter aligns with Mars, then peace will guide the planets and love will steer the stars.....

This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius.....

.....now that recreational cannabis is legal in California. We will all get a front row seat on the benefits, the problems and the changes for society. I drove by the dispensary in Old Town Eureka last week and there was an enthusiastic line of adults down the street.

California was the fifth state to legalize recreational cannabis and now many more states are considering it. This makes California the largest legal marijuana market in the nation. The Federal government still wants to outlaw it but that stance is not supported by public opinion.

Business Insider predicts that cannabis sales will hit 4 billion dollars this year and go over 5 billion next year. By comparison, California's beer sales are at 5 billion annually. California will have a fifteen per cent tax and cities and counties can tax on top of that. So we will have a new revenue source and new regulatory and enforcement responsibilities to pay for as well.

I have read many comments online from people associated with "THE INDUSTRY", as they call themselves. Many are complaining that taxes and regulations will cut into their lucrative profits. Let me pause and wipe away an imaginary tear. The Industry has been untaxed for too long and it is time to join the rest of us, filling out confusing forms and bitching about taxes and bureaucrats.

Most of my concern about marijuana has been the negative effects of the illegal production and black market sales. Legalization should improve that but it will not eliminate it. If weed is still illegal in other states, then California will likely try to meet that demand. And some growers will likely stick with the black market to avoid paying taxes.

Legalization will likely be good for the environment. The unregulated cultivation was devastating on watersheds, water consumption, wildlife and

more. Of course, large commercial grows in other parts of the State could put increased demand on our North Coast water.

How will legalization affect people? It should reduce unnecessary enforcement and incarceration, which is good. So far, other states report there has not been an observed increase in teenage use of marijuana. But other states do not do a good job of tracking that, in my opinion.

The Humboldt County Office of Education cooperates with the rest of the State in producing a neat resource: The California Healthy Kids Survey. This provides a statewide snapshot into the health risks and resiliencies facing youth, surveying students in grades 5, 7, 9 and 11. The latest data from 2015/16 shows about one third of Humboldt County Eleventh Graders use marijuana. Look it up online.

We can see how other states have been affected but California is the world's seventh largest economy, hardly comparable to Colorado. We will just have to deal with the good, the bad and the ugly as it surfaces.

Let the sun shine. Let the sun shine in.

This is Mike Goldsby for Community Comment