

## Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology receives \$1 million National Institute of Justice Grant

Faculty in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, working with members of the WSU Division Governmental Studies and Services, were awarded a \$1 million grant from the National Institute of Justice to study the impact of marijuana legalization on police practices in the state of Washington. The research includes:

Principal Investigator (PI): Mary Stohr, Dept. of Criminal Justice and Criminology

Co-PI's:

Craig Hemmens, Dept. of Criminal Justice and Criminology

Dale Willits, Dept. of Criminal Justice and Criminology

David Makin, Dept. of Criminal Justice and Criminology

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Darryl Wood, Dept. of Criminal Justice and Criminology, WSU Vancouver

John Snyder, Division of Governmental Studies and Services

Nicholas Lovrich, emeritus faculty in the Department of Political Science and Division of Governmental Studies and Services

The pace of legalization of marijuana for medical and recreational use is accelerating [25 states have medical statutes and 4 states + Wash., D.C., have enacted recreational marijuana laws] despite the continued listing of cannabis as a banned substance by the federal government. The federal government has taken a "hands off" stance with the stated purpose of learning from policy innovation in this area, while reserving the right it has under its preemption powers under the Controlled Substances Act to preclude any further state legislation and overturn existing state legislation not in compliance with federal policy. One of the key areas such "learning" lies in the effects of marijuana legalization on crime and law enforcement practices.

Washington's I-502, creating a state-regulated recreational marijuana industry, was crafted to produce pre

this type of policy innovation learning—specifically with respect to the revenue- and commerce-enhancing benefits, and the public health and public safety costs of marijuana legalization.

The highly respected Washington State Institute of Public Policy (WSIPP) is charged with reporting the results of a systematic benefits/cost assessment on an ongoing basis until 2032.

This grant award entails the establishment of ongoing collaboration with WSIPP to add depth to the public safety impact assessment through a multi-site (10), multi-method study of impacts documented in a cross section of locations (including urban, rural, tribal, and border areas) involving intensive work with state, county, and municipal police partners. Crime trends, longitudinal time series comparisons between counties that have and have not permitted and in some cases banned marijuana sales in their jurisdictions, the documented changes in police practices, and the collection of officer-borne and car-mounted camera footage will all be done.

In addition, in-depth interviews and focus group sessions will be conducted with informed and experienced officers and police administrators discussing the challenges of marijuana legalization “on the ground” as federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies in the state carry out their public safety duties under greatly changed circumstances. The NIJ expects to be able to make use of the findings reported in this work to assist law enforcement in states which are moving toward legalization in the 2016 election and beyond.

See the [WSU News article](#).

