

**S.O.S** 

***Save Our Society From Drugs™***



**ANNUAL REPORT  
2017**



## “Early on

we realized that drug prevention couldn't rely solely on educational efforts, that policy work played a vital role in ensuring success. With that in mind, S.O.S. was established and today remains a leading organization in the anti-drug movement.

## Working together,

with your support, we are able to provide the scientific research on the harms and impacts of drug use. Thank you for dedication to our nation's future.”

**Betty S. Sembler**  
Founder and Chair

## “As we close out 2017,

we at Save Our Society From Drugs want to thank our generous supporters and volunteers for their passion and goal to promoting policies that aim to prevent and reduce substance abuse.

## S.O.S. remains committed

to fighting for policies that are in the best interests of public health and safety and we look forward to a successful 2018.”

**Calvina Fay**  
Executive Director



## OTHER OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

### Secretary/Treasurer

Stephanie Haynes, Community Advocate

### Director

Jim Frishe, President, Blue Herron Consulting, Inc.

### Director

Jim Holton, President, Holton Companies

### Director

T. Williard Fair, President, Greater Miami Urban League

# OUR MISSION STATEMENT

## Save Our Society From Drugs (S.O.S.)

was founded by community activist and drug prevention/education specialist Betty S. Sembler. The purpose of S.O.S. is to help Americans defeat ballot initiatives, statutory proposals and other attempts to “medicalize” unsafe, ineffective and unapproved drugs such as marijuana, heroin and crack cocaine.

S.O.S. works to prevent, counter and refute all drug legalization efforts throughout our nation.

Through grassroots and direct lobbying, education and all other legal means at our disposal, we work to reduce illegal drug use, drug addiction and drug-related illness and death.

Save Our Society From Drugs is incorporated in the District of Columbia under Internal Revenue Code 501 (c) (4) as a nonprofit organization.

## State Legislation

Save Our Society From Drugs is the only national drug policy organization tracking ALL drug policy legislation at the federal and state levels. Every day our staff looks at legislation introduced in each state, determines if it is appropriate legislation to track and then categorizes it as pro-drug or anti-drug. 2017 was extremely busy for our small staff who tracked 1,321 pieces of legislation, compared to a total of 960 legislative efforts in 2016!

# ANTI-DRUG LEGISLATION

In 2017, 45 states and the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico introduced 651 pieces of legislation that sought to reduce illicit drug use and abuse. This number is higher than what we saw in 2016 when 405 pieces of anti-drug legislation were introduced. Of the 651 bills introduced this year, 134 were signed into law and 180 will carry over to the 2018 session.

Wins for drug prevention and substance abuse treatment include bills that:

- **Enhanced state prescription drug monitoring programs**
- **Scheduled chemical compounds used to manufacture illicit synthetics drugs, making sales and possession illegal**
- **Implemented and enhanced state problem solving courts such as drug courts, DUI courts and Veterans courts.**
- **Addressed the opioid epidemic by limiting the number of days for initial opioid prescriptions, increasing penalties for fentanyl trafficking, expanding access to naloxone and implementing Good Samaritan laws**

Legislators in both Arkansas and Florida passed legislation to implement medical marijuana ballot measures previously approved by voters during the 2016 election cycle. S.O.S. worked in both states to ensure that the implementing legislation aimed to avoid the negative impacts seen in states with similar laws. Big wins for both states included language that prohibits the use of smoked marijuana as a medicine, marketing restrictions for dispensaries and restrictions on marijuana infused food products.

# SPECIAL FOCUS

## IMPLEMENTATION OF AMENDMENT 2

After medical marijuana was passed by Florida voters in the 2016 election cycle, S.O.S. went to work drafting implementation recommendations based on experiences in states with similar programs.

The recommendations were presented as a policy paper to legislators and were used by community coalitions in their advocacy efforts. S.O.S. and state partners testified at several legislative hearings and worked with the bill sponsors to help craft language that put public health and safety above the financial interests of the marijuana industry. In the end our efforts paid off and most of our recommendations made it into law.



# PRO-DRUG LEGISLATION

2017 was another record breaking year for the number of pro-drug bills introduced at the state level.

S.O.S. tracked 610 pro-drug state bills, a significant increase compared to 555 bills in 2016, 416 in 2015 and only 269 in 2014. Of the 610 pro-drug bills, 420 were defeated, representing an 87% success rate! This result was directly tied to the aggressive efforts of S.O.S., including our members and grassroots partners who worked passionately to prevent the escalation of drug use and abuse.

Pro-drug activities that were defeated in 2017 include attempts to:

- legalize marijuana in Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Missouri, Minnesota, Mississippi, New York, Rhode Island, West Virginia and Wyoming;
- expand medical marijuana laws in several states; and
- allow drug Injection sites in Washington





# 115TH FIRST CONGRESSIONAL SESSION

The 115th Congress convened on January 3, 2017 and will adjourn on January 3, 2019.

During the first part of the session, S.O.S. tracked 57 federal bills, 31 pro-drug and 26 anti-drug bills.

Similar to state legislation, much of the federal drug policy legislation focused on marijuana and opioids. Twenty-six congressional bills aim to broaden U.S. marijuana policy. As 2017 comes to a close, we have been successful in keeping them from full votes.

As the 115th Congress enters into its second session, it is evident that marijuana and opioids will continue to dominate the drug policy landscape. S.O.S. remains optimistic that, with support from Attorney General Sessions, the Trump administration will take action and improve enforcement of federal drug laws. We will continue to work with key members of the administration to provide data and research on the impacts of marijuana legalization. We will also continue to push for the implementation of strategies recommended by the White House Commission on Opioids to fight the nation's opioid epidemic.

# SOS ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

With close to two decades of experience, S.O.S. continues to be a leading voice in all matters related to drug policy. We accomplish this by furthering the conversation along with advocacy and lobbying

## FURTHERING THE CONVERSATION

### S.O.S. delivers monthly legislative updates

on drug policy issues to our subscribers and partners, as well as state-specific legislative tracking reports to community anti-drug coalitions around the nation who, without us, would have a difficult time navigating the legislative process.

Our monthly reports also include information on emerging drug trends and new research.

### In 2017

S.O.S. successfully disseminated research on drug policy issues and effective strategies to reduce drug abuse by presenting to state associations, community and civic groups and legislative delegation meetings. S.O.S. also partnered with local community coalitions to provide speakers and panelists at town hall meetings and drug summits.

### In Florida,

S.O.S. partnered with county and statewide coalitions to co-host our 5th annual drug prevention summit in Tampa that was attended by approximately 300 state and community stakeholders. We also presented on Impacts of Changing Marijuana Policies, Marijuana in the Workplace and the Implementation of Florida's Medical Marijuana Law throughout the state.

### At the national level

S.O.S. participated in the Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America's (CADCA) 27th Annual National Leadership Forum and their 16th Mid-Year Training Institute. At the Leadership Forum, S.O.S. partnered with attorney David Evans to present on Understanding the Marijuana Policy Landscape and at the Mid-Year event we partnered with Merilee Fowler from MATFORCE and Mr. Evans to conduct an advanced training workshop titled Marijuana: Making an Impact by Reading Between the Policy Lines.



# ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING



S.O.S. continues to work closely with local coalitions and national colleagues to prepare and submit testimony before legislative committees in many states.

We help to educate lawmakers on the impacts of proposed legislation and to support efforts that put community health and safety first by reducing access to addictive substances. Many of our partners are unable to lobby and in those instances S.O.S. takes special care to provide tools that can be used to educate using data-driven talking points and research materials. Many times S.O.S. is asked to take the lead on specific issues and be a voice for groups whose funding prohibits lobbying.

## In Florida,

S.O.S. partnered with the Florida Coalition Alliance to host the 2nd Annual Prevention Advocacy Day at the State Capitol where members from prevention coalitions distributed information and conducted legislative meetings regarding the impacts of substance abuse in the state.

## At the national level,

S.O.S. supported CADCA's 27th National Leadership Forum and Prevention Advocacy Day and led a group of community coalitions to meet with congressional members to advocate for prevention priorities.



# VOTILITY STATS



63,000  
advocacy messages

Votility is the advocacy system that S.O.S. uses to send out action alerts. The system allows us to create landing pages on different bills we are following or issues of concern and also allows users to sign up and have a page devoted to legislation in their state.

This year our action alerts resulted in over 63,000 advocacy messages being sent to almost 600 elected officials across the nation. By providing this service, S.O.S. is allowing citizens' voices to be heard on important drug policy issues that impact their communities.



600  
elected officials



Your Voices  
heard

# SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media provides abundant opportunities to educate and engage individuals on drug policy issues.



Find us on Twitter  
[SaveOurSociety1](#)

## S.O.S. uses Twitter

to engage elected officials and the media on trending drug topics and legislative actions and

## Facebook

to share research, media updates and action alerts. Through our Facebook posts, S.O.S. reached approximately 42,000 individuals in 2017, almost doubling our 2016 reach.



Find us on Facebook  
[SaveOurSocietyFromDrugs](#)

# 2018 FOCUS

## S.O.S. will actively work

to support legislation that seeks to expand problem solving courts, combat access to synthetic designer drugs, enhance prescription drug monitoring programs and legislation that addresses the nation's opioid epidemic.

## S.O.S. will continue to provide

model ordinances and legislation to local, state, and federal lawmakers on a variety of drug policy issues and work with community organizations to promote prevention priorities.

## We will continue to push back

against groups seeking to legalize illicit drugs and lawmakers who put special interest groups before public health and safety priorities of their constituents.

## In 2018, S.O.S. will advocate

for federal and state funding for substance abuse prevention efforts and will urge the current administration to take a leadership role in a national prevention campaign.

**5999 CENTRAL AVENUE, SUITE 301  
ST. PETERSBURG, FL 33710**

Phone: 727-828-0210 | Fax: 727-828-0212

[www.saveoursociety.org](http://www.saveoursociety.org)

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