



2018

# Annual Report





# Officers and Board Members



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Betty S. Sembler

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## 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. 2018 was extremely busy for our small staff who tracked 1,380 pieces of legislation, compared to a total of 1321 legislative efforts in 2017.

In 2018, 45 states and the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico, introduced 598 pieces of legislation that sought to reduce illicit drug use and abuse. This number is lower than what we saw in 2017 when 651 pieces of anti-drug legislation were introduced.

Of the 598 bills introduced in 2018, 177 were signed into law and 2 will carry over to the 2019 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 synthetic 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
- Restricted state "medical" marijuana programs by addressing marketing, edibles, and THC potency.

2018 was another record-breaking year for the number of pro-drug bills introduced at the state level. S.O.S. tracked 685 pro-drug state bills, a significant increase compared to 610 bills in 2017, 555 in 2016 and 416 in 2015. Of the 685 pro-drug bills, 487 were defeated, representing a 71% 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.

When you compare our staff size and operating budget to that of Big Marijuana, the results are impressive!

Pro-drug activities that were defeated in 2018 include attempts to:

- Legalize marijuana in Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Mississippi, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Wisconsin, and West Virginia
- Expanded medical marijuana laws in several states
- Establish "safe injection" sites in several states



# 2018 Ballot Measures



**2018 proved to be a chaotic year in terms of the ballot box.**

The continuing push to legalize marijuana meant drug policy became part of political platforms on both sides of the aisle.

Many of the proposed ballot measures met their demise due to lack of funding and poor planning by marijuana activist groups. Leveraging their weaknesses and by partnering with several state coalitions in community education efforts to reinforce the harms associated with marijuana use, we ensured that thirty of the proposed marijuana ballot measures failed to qualify for the 2018 ballot.

North Dakota pulled out a big win, defeating efforts to legalize recreational marijuana use with almost 60% of the vote!

**North Dakota  
60%  
Victory**

Unfortunately Missouri, Utah, and Michigan were not able to defeat the push by Big Marijuana. Despite the great campaign work by Healthy and Productive Michigan, Michigan became the tenth state to legalize the possession, cultivation, and retail sale of marijuana. The other nine states in this failed experiment include: Alaska, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington.

Both Utah and Missouri voted to legalize marijuana as a medicine. Like Florida, Amendment 2 in Missouri amends their state constitution and leaves implementation up to the state legislature.



Although some of these ballot box results are disappointing, our work does not change. Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit substance in the United States and its use negatively impacts public health and public safety. New research shows that marijuana is increasingly displacing alcohol and cigarettes as the first substance used among adolescents who use multiple substances. It is important that we continue our education and policy efforts to reduce access and availability of marijuana, especially to our youth.





# 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 quarterly national 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 reports also include information on emerging drug trends, new research, media coverage featuring our colleagues and the success stories of our many partners.

In 2018, 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 Oregon, S.O.S. served on the planning committee to co-host a marijuana summit that was attended by more than 100 community stakeholders representing many states.

In Florida, S.O.S. partnered with county and statewide coalitions to co-host our 6th Annual Southeastern Regional Drug Prevention Summit in Tampa, Florida that was attended by approximately 300 stakeholders.

At the national level S.O.S. participated in the Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America's (CADCA) Mid-Year Conference where we presented on *Prevention in a Changing Marijuana Landscape* and *Marijuana and Opioids: Impacts to the Workplace*.





## 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 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 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.



## Votility Stats

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 thousands of advocacy messages being sent to elected officials across the nation. By providing this service, S.O.S. is allowing citizen voices to be heard on important drug policy issues that impact their communities.

## Social Media

Social media provides abundant opportunities to educate and engage individuals on drug policy issues. 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 daily Facebook posts, S.O.S. reached approximately 34,000 individuals in 2018.



Save Our Society From Drugs



@SaveOurSociety1

# 2019 Focus

1

**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.

2

**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.

3

**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.

4

**In 2019, 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.





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