

specmind

From: "Rene Alvarez M.D." <alvarez@itsa.ucsf.edu>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Saturday, February 03, 2001 11:36 AM
Subject: sentencing

to whom it may concern,

As a medical doctor who has worked in several busy emergency rooms, I find it deplorable and tragic that ecstasy may be equated to heroin for sentencing. While I have seen many deaths related to heroin, not just from overdose, but also soft tissue infections, AIDS, and Hepatitis C. Ecstasy has had no impact on our emergency room at all. From a medical standpoint, it is safer to take ecstasy than drink alcohol or be a regular tobacco user.

Rene Alvarez M.D.

San Francisco General Hospital, Ward 83

alvarez@itsa.ucsf.edu

Michael Courlander
Public Affairs Officer
Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Sentencing Commission
One Columbus Circle, N.E.
Washington, DC., 20002-8002.
(202) 502-4500

Dear Sir,

I am writing to express what one could term frustration, with the proposed new sentencing guidelines regarding 3,4-methylenedioxy methamphetamine (MDMA) and chemicals similar to that structure or producing effects similar in nature. First I would like to detail a few errors regarding the Commission's beliefs regarding this substance. Then I would like to discuss the proposed new sentencing with respect to the chemical itself and that chemical's effect upon society.

Let me first provide the Commission's own words to describe what their perception of MDMA and its derivatives.

"It has been represented to the Commission that Ecstasy (i.e., MDMA, MDEA, MDA and PMA) is similar in its hallucinogenic effect on the user to mescaline, and also has been described as having an added stimulant component that can elevate heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature. It has also been suggested that the drug is neither physically nor psychologically addictive." (Page 10, Volume II: Proposed Amendments to the Sentencing Guidelines (January 24, 2001)).

3,4-methylenedioxy methamphetamine is unlike other "hallucinogenic" amphetamines in chemical structure, and also in action upon the brain. To even call it a hallucinogenic compound is erroneous. In no way can MDMA be considered similar in effect as that of mescaline. Simply because both chemicals share an amphetamine ring as their chemical base does not in any way determine the bio-neurological effects upon the body. In considering the "added stimulant component that can elevate heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature," one must look beyond a generalization. Low doses of MDMA (<1.0mg/Kg of body weight) do not produce a stimulant effect upon the body. Also, as shown by research performed by Jessica Mahlberg at the University of Chicago, MDMA does not elevate body temperature but in fact lessens the body's ability to regulate body temperature. To further clarify the non-addictive statement regarding MDMA, regular intake of MDMA causes a decreased pharmacologic response, meaning if users continually take MDMA, the subjective effects, which one would guess their reason for taking this compound, substantially decrease, eventually becoming non-existent after a few days of continual ingestion. Hardly a viable compound for compulsive use.

To equate this drug with heroin for the purposes of sentencing, on its face, is simply wrong. The effects of heroin on the user are completely different, almost contradictory, from the effects of MDMA, and the potential for abuse is also absolutely different. The whole concept of "equating" drugs and finding equivalent measures is absurd. Each of these compounds causes different reactions in each person. Each of these compounds interacts with society at large in different ways. MDMA has therapeutic values far beyond that of heroin, and to deny researchers the ability to use this chemical is wrong, but to go so far as to form excessive penalties for its possession or use is unacceptable.

I hope you heed the intelligence of the society that you are charged with protecting by not increasing the penalty for MDMA.

Sincerely,

Jeff Hjelt
215 Athol Ave #3
Oakland, CA 94606

specmind

From: <poemelyric@mediaone.net>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Saturday, February 03, 2001 9:41 PM
Subject: The Commission's Proposed Amendment Equates MDMA to Heroin
 Dear Sir or Madame,

I am writing to let the Commission know my stance on the Amendment to make MDMA the equivalent to heroin that is before the commission.

First off, I would like to state that MDMA is not an addictive drug as heroin is. It is absurd that this commission would EVEN consider classifying MDMA in this group. Heroin and Cocaine addiction is a very serious issue in this country and to put MDMA in this class is downplaying the seriousness of addictive drugs.

MDMA should carry the same drug penalty as Marijuana. MDMA isn't addictive like heroin and it doesn't alter peoples minds like LSD or cause violent outbreaks like Crystal methamphetamine. It is by no means a hallucinogenic and doesn't alter the users reality. On <http://www.esctasy.org>, a reader sent in a question about hallucinogenic properties of E and the scientific response was "I expect it was strong MDA, 2CB or possibly a mixture containing LSD. You could probably tell by how long it lasted: in order, MDMA is shortest then 2CB then MDA then LSD which is up to 8 hours". There is no scientific basis to consider MDMA on the same level as heroin and cocaine. Scientists aren't even sure what the long term drawbacks to MDMA is.

People are treating MDMA like it causes people to do injury to themselves or to others. With knowledge of how MDMA works in the human body, the user can come away from the experience with a enlightenment and a perspective to things that they wouldn't have discussed or thought about before. MDMA expands the horizons that people close off due to the harsh realities of interpersonal relationships. This is a drug that can benefit humans if used to its full potential as a psychiatric drug. By making it illegal, the Federal Government has only succeeded in making it one of the most unpredictable street drugs. Now, people don't know if they are receiving Ecstasy or if they are getting the dangerous and cheaper to make alternative, DMX and it's largely due to the fear of being arrested due to the erratic drug laws. The drug quantity table should also be altered so that if you do hold MDMA in the same respect as Heroin, jail terms should only be dispensed for high quantities of MDMA. A five year prison term shouldn't be dispensed for 2 pills of Ecstasy. Not only would that cause more prison overcrowding for a non addictive drug, it would drive production of the drug up once again and it would cause a flood of dangerous batches of DMX.

Secondly, MDMA was initially a drug that was used by psychiatrists to cure violent mentally ill patients. Like any antidepressant, there are drawbacks to usage of this drug. When I was taking dizipramine, I was told to drink water often, about 8 oz. an hour or so. Even with Prozac, I was given this suggestion. And I ask this question: What makes MDMA illegal and Xanax not? Xanax is also an abused psychiatric drug that has a higher street value than Ecstasy. Why ban one and not the other? While it is true that MDMA has been the cause of death by teenagers, the amount of kids being hospitalized is no greater than thoses being brought in for alcohol poisoning. With MDMA, knowledge is power and many kids are riddled by the press about what they believe to be the truth about it but they never are given accurate information about it or what to do or not to do. I recall watching a local news

program in Boston that stated that parents that find their kids "high" on Ecstasy should give their children lots and lots of water because it will dilute the MDMA in their systems. This was totally false information that could potentially kill because MDMA depleats the salt in the human body which makes it difficult to absorb the high rate of water that is being taken in. Either that or kids are told not to drink water which causes dehydration.

In all truth, there wouldn't be an Ecstasy problem if the press didn't keep glorifying the "rave scene". Before the Ecstasy craze, you would see one or two people selling at a rave, now because of all the press being dug up, the clubs are being over run with "E" dealers. If the press didn't constantly keep hitting teens with the image of partying "X'ed" out 20-somethings dancing the night away. In my opinion, that's what's is causing the rise of Ecstasy use.

I thank you for taking time to read this letter.

Thanks again,

Karen Fouche
70 Alder St
Waltham, Ma 02453

"Don't you try to save that anchor from drowning cause it won't work..."-Scarce

specmind

From: "Jeremi Finn" <elfinn3@hotmail.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2001 10:01 PM
Subject: MDMA = Heroin
Sentencing Commission,

I have been an advocate of harm reduction programs almost all of my life. When the AIDS epidemic surfaced in my home town high school a few years ago, I was one of the few Protestants who recognized the futility of pushing abstinence. I supported realistic solutions to the problem of promiscuous sexual activity among teenagers. I pushed for a condom distribution program and encouraged my fellow students to educate themselves about the dangers of unprotected sex so that they could make informed decisions. Many people in the Christian community looked down on me for "encouraging" such behavior. But what they didn't realize is that those kids were going to have sex no matter how hard we pummeled them with doctrines of abstinence. I am convinced that probably more than a few lives were saved by making condoms available at my high school.

When I read that congress wants to increase the penalty of trafficking and selling ecstasy to a level equivalent to heroin I had a terrible vision of ecstasy producers putting all kinds of dangerous, less expensive chemicals into their pills. Yes, some of them might be intimidated to the point where they quit making ecstasy, but those are the ones with some moral values. The rest of the ecstasy manufacturers are simply going to look at the ecstasy anti-proliferation act and say to themselves, "hey, I could put cheaper products into my pills and still have the same penalty if I get caught."

As of right now, we know enough about ecstasy to know that the dangers of taking real MDMA are less than those of taking fake pills. Many pills containing DXM (a legal but more dangerous drug than MDMA) or speed (a far more addictive and dangerous drug than MDMA) are being sold already as ecstasy. The solution to this problem is not to make the penalty for the safer drug equivalent to the more dangerous. The solution, like with the AIDS epidemic, is to educate people on the real dangers of each drug and give them the freedom to make an educated decision. People are going to buy pills and take them. It would be better for everyone if the pills they take are real MDMA rather than speed, ketamine, PMA, DXM, or heroin.

My plea is that you will look at the actual evidence for MDMA neurotoxicity, possibility of addiction, and long term effects, physical and psychological (which, by the way, you'll find are almost all remarkably positive despite temporary lower levels of serotonin), and compare these to the other schedule one (or two, or three) drugs before you assign the sentence for trafficking this substance. Keep in mind that by increasing the penalty for trafficking MDMA you are encouraging manufacturers to use less expensive, more dangerous chemicals, effectively flooding the black market with adulterated pills. This would cause far more problems than it would solve.

First of all, there would be a higher rate of ecstasy related deaths. The current number of ecstasy related deaths per year is remarkably low

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given the number of people who use ecstasy, especially when compared to other drugs like heroin, alcohol, speed, and tobacco. The few ecstasy related deaths that have been reported were almost all caused by adulterated pills. The six "ecstasy related" deaths in Florida last year, and the three before them in Chicago, were all caused by PMA, a non-ecstasy like substance. In fact PMA is not a recreational drug; no one would willingly take PMA if they knew it wasn't real ecstasy.

Second, many people would become addicted to the non-MDMA substances being sold as ecstasy. MDMA is not itself physically addictive. There are people who may develop psychological "addictions" but even these must fade. The effects of MDMA wear off if it is taken too often. However, other chemicals which are cheaper and easier to manufacture will produce chemical dependency if they are sold as ecstasy. This is definitely a step in the wrong direction, especially when combined with the influx of deadly non-MDMA pills discussed above.

The solution does not lie in the idealist principles of abstinence. What we need is a realistic solution, and increasing the punishment for not being abstinent is not realistic. Harm reduction programs, such as Dance Safe, are a step in the right direction. They recognize the reality of the situation--people are using drugs--and they work to educate those people, providing accurate information and realistic safety procedures for those to whom "just say no" is not a practical alternative.

If the world were an ideal place, people would do everything they wanted to do, want only what was beneficial to everyone, and have all that they wanted. But it is not. And idealist principles do not result in effective action in the real world. Please consider the facts about MDMA, compare them to the facts about other drugs, and make a fair decision. To pretend MDMA is as dangerous as heroin is to effectively make it so. Please exercise caution and work towards a real good. Reduce harm, don't just legislate against it.

Jeremi Finn

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specmind

From: <juliano@cwctv.net>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2001 6:22 AM
Subject: punishment is not the intelligent answer

i live in england, and am a voluntary project worker. i work in a needle exchange which provides advice and support for people with substance misuse problems.

this service is vital! not only does it protect clients, and the rest of the community from the spread of diseases such as HIV, AIDs, Hepititus, etc., but it allows people whose only "crime" is being physically addicted to a substance to be dealt with with respect, and a friendly caring attitude.

such respect has its own results. what systems of punishment do is create paranoia, and disrespect for authority. not only from the pople who are persecuted, but also from young people who being astute will detect the double standards regarding what society allows and what it condemns. For example alcohol and tobacco are tolerated.

regarding Ecstasy being similar to heroin? false. Heroin is a narcotic whih in its extreme use will provide sleep, and death, whist E is a stimulant, used by youth as part of the rave culture.

i have chosen to approach this issue in my way because i'm not trusting in playing the formal game. the whole premise of the "war on drugs2 is a false one, and in fact encourages what it claims it seeks to avoid. which is driving people TO drugs.

Filling up prisons with the disaffected, and persecuted minority/majority is only a "putting off2 what culture will sometime HAVE to face. the whole question of why people do drugs needs a radical revision of how we ALL are with our culture

Julian (throw a pebble in a pond and see what happens)

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specmind

From: "Chris Rivas" <thinctwo@mail.utexas.edu>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2001 9:27 PM
Subject: Ecstasy Anti-Proliferation Act of 2000 (section 3664 of Pub. L. 106-310),
Hi

News of having similar punishment for 'ecstasy' possession as for heroin is very discouraging in the U.S.'s anti-drug stand. I can understand the laws concerning the stiffness for possession of heroin; I have seen many people destroyed by the drug. While I do know a few 'e-tards', most ecstasy users I know are fairly responsible and reliable individuals, certainly not the miscreants heroin use seems to breed. It is a safer drug than heroin; 100mg of mdma will not injure, while that much heroin is a very stout dose, and liable to injure.

Its risk per gram is much less than that of heroin.
It does not cause as much deterioration of society.

Of course I have no numbers, I just report what I see. Were I to study this more, I would look at users of each, although it would be hard to get the middle class, college students, and responsible users to admit use.

If I were to outline new punishments, I would recommend an exponential curve, as many possess smaller amounts ranging up to 1-3 grams without being distributors in the way that someone in possession of 3 kilograms of marijuana would be a distributor.

my two cents.

chris r

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specmind

From: "Kenneth Kron" <kkron@IPRG.nokia.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2001 8:19 AM
Subject: MDMA sentencing guidelines
To whom it may concern

Please reconsider the proposed action on the Ecstasy Anti-Proliferation Act of 2000. In particular I have a problem with the the phrasing

"that has either a chemical structure similar to MDMA or an effect on the central nervous system substantially similar to or greater than MDMA."

The phrase "greater effect" on the nervous system does not constrain itself to health risks.

So first I ask you to send the Ecstasy Anti-Proliferation Act of 2000 back to congress for clarification. I would support efforts to control the distribution for human consumption of any dangerous poisons but am concerned about the potential for abuse of laws that could be used against well informed and well intentioned health care providers. Traditional medical practitioners have at their disposal very potent herbal concoctions which "large pharmacy" could use this law to stifle.

I'll also ask you to consider the following quote from John Gilmore.

"The fundamental problem with outlawing consensual crimes is that none of the participants will report them. To make them enforceable you need a societal mechanism for monitoring consensual behavior and reporting it to the police. This is not conducive to privacy."

John Gilmore -- excerpted from a message on the politech mailing list <http://www.politechbot.com/p-01561.html>

It is obvious to me that giving MDMA a heroin equivalence will result in massive privacy invasions and police raids on what are otherwise legally organized social occasions.

While I do not take lightly the reported deaths from MDMA usage, negligent homicide is already prosecutable under the law. It is not the function of our government to protect it's citizens from every dangerous situation. The United States is said to be founded on a free and open society. With this freedom comes responsibility ,only by accepting the responsibility do we earn the freedom. When you protect us from responsibility for our actions you take away or freedom to act.

Sincerely.

Kenneth Kron

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specmind

From: "Virskus, Joe" <Joe.Virskus@caspiangroup.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2001 12:28 PM
Subject: Ecstasy Sentencing Alert

I would like to make some comments on the Ecstasy Anti-Proliferation Act of 2000. First, for background, I am 21, a computer programmer, and catholic. I rarely drink alcohol, and the only drug I use on occasion is MDMA. In the past (in high school), I experimented with a variety of drugs, from Marijuana, to LSD, to Mescaline, to Mushrooms, to Cocaine, to DXM, to Methamphetamines. I make it a point to research the effects and side-effects of all of these drugs prior to taking them, so that I may make an informed decision about what types of things I put into my body. Over the years, I have come to the decision that in general, most of these drugs are bad for me, and that is why I no longer use them. MDMA is the only one I continue to use, and the one I feel is the least harmful.

Reasons Mescaline is worse than Ecstasy:

- Mescaline lasts for hours, at least twice as long as MDMA.
- Mescaline can result in a "bad trip"... MDMA never will.. only positive feelings arise.
- When on Ecstasy, you pretty much just act like yourself. The drug itself is very subtle in it's effects. General euphoria, empathy, and other subtle effects creep over you, but you still generally appear to be yourself. Mescaline, on the other hand, can dramatically change your personality... making you seem strange and foreign... alienating people... and possibly permanently affecting your personality (if not clinically, then just through new perspectives you have gained from your trip).
- Ecstasy becomes less potent the more you take. If you take one pill earlier, and then continue to take more later.. they will not affect you as strong as the first (because your reaction to the pills is limited by your serotonin levels). With Mescaline, you will go farther and farther into your trip.. perhaps to dangerous levels.
- Ecstasy is commonly used in clubs and legal raves.. where medical personal are on site, and ready to take care of OD cases if they occur.

Reasons Heroin is FAR worse than Ecstasy:

- The OD rate for Heroin is WAY higher than Ecstasy.
- Heroin users are generally addicted, or at least habitual. It is very common for Ecstasy users to try it only a handful of times.. with people they trust.
- Heroin can spread blood transferable diseases, Ecstasy can't.
- Too many more to list.. and I am sure others will cover this topic better than I could.

What it comes down to, is that I use Ecstasy, my conservative-republican-catholic mother knows it, and she is ok with it because she knows I am responsible. I think the best effect of Ecstasy

is that it has turned dance clubs and raves into events that are safe. No longer are they full of drunk and angry punks.. but instead, sedated and empathetic punks. I will continue to make my decisions based on my own judgment, and not on yours, so this law does not affect me... but I would encourage you to try to keep an open mind when making YOUR decision.

Thank you,
-Joe Virskus
San Francisco, CA

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2/1/2001

specmind

From: "Joseph Illescas" <joeill@mediaone.net>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2001 8:41 AM
Subject: Innacuracies
 To whom it may concern,

As a former drug user and current professional that advocates a clean and healthy lifestyle, I am against any drug use. This is especially true for the use of the legal recreational drugs alcohol and nicotine, which ironically kill more people every year than illegal recreational drug use. This letter is to help clear up any misconceptions in order to help achieve accuracy in all ecstasy related information and fairness in sentencing.

To begin with, the effects of ecstasy are nothing like mescaline. Mescaline produces a "trip"- like effect - hallucination and a sense of complete detachment from reality. This can be very dangerous as laws of physics as well as the laws of government can seem irrelevant. Never have I hallucinated or have known anyone else to have hallucinated from the use of MDMA.

Cocaine and heroin have most often been compared but this is completely asinine. These drugs are, without question, addictive in nature leading them to be much more grave. An addict will do "ANYTHING" for their next hit - steal, kill,.... Moreover, these drugs can also be abused to the point of overdose and consequential death. These consequences are much more severe to individuals and society than ecstasy and should therefore not be compared in any way to ecstasy.

Ecstasy produces a sense of empathy, love, and euphoria with a combined rush from accelerating the heart and a heightened sense of touch. This is the complete opposite of the effects of marijuana or, more specifically, THC, which promotes apathy, and sedation. The effects of MDMA are, as you may well know, the consequences of a mass release of serotonin in the brain and the amphetamine nature of the drug. They lead to wanting to dance or "become one with the music" and be social and touched. In an environment of ecstasy users everyone wants to be friends and help each other and has been compared to the free-love atmosphere of the '60s. I have also read how psychologists in the late '70s and early '80s would take MDMA to foster their sense of empathy and therefore become better able to diagnose and treat their patients.

Ecstasy is not addictive and its only side effects are dehydration and exhaustion usually from the combined effects of an accelerated heartbeat and dancing. These effects are not any different from caffeine or diet pills. The abuse ecstasy (by this I mean those individuals taking 10-30 pills over a day or two - an analogy (as the government seems to love those in matter of drugs for some reason) would be a few drinks (a dose, or pill) of ecstasy) vs. a case of vodka (over use)) leads to irregular sleeping patterns and depression from damage to the brain's ability to re-uptake serotonin. Death from ecstasy has been linked to "bad ecstasy" such as the use of PMA or DXM instead of MDMA. I've read that in some rare cases severe dehydration and pre-existing heart conditions caused death in individuals taking ecstasy. Again though, these can cause death in individuals taking caffeine, diet pills, or any other substance containing amphetamines.

I would suggest that any official given the power to create laws regarding ecstasy, or any other non-addictive drug with no side effects if a mild dose is taken, to take a mild dose. How else can one accurately know and report on something except from a personal experience?

Lastly, as far as sentencing goes, the important issue here is to realistically weigh the cost of ecstasy use to society vs. the cost of increased punishment (including the cost (time and money) relating to police, courts, taxpayers, jails, government officials and the lives of individuals). Then is the projected decrease in use worth the cost to society and is it fair given the effects if the drug? We have seen from history what increasing punishment has done to the cocaine market, for instance, where cocaine is much more pure and plentiful today than in the past. The same goes for heroin. The only real solution to any drug related problem is education and better alternatives to drug use. Meeting drug problems with an extreme right wing solution makes it seem as though it is the politicians who are detached from reality.

Sincerely,

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2/4/2001

Joseph Illescas

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specmind

From: "weaselynn" <weaselynn@email.msn.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2001 4:43 PM
Subject: Response to Commission's Amendment
 To whom it may concern,

This letter is in response to the Commission's proposed Amendment to equate Ecstasy with Heroin for the sake of sentencing.

I am a 21 year old female, engaged to be married. I own my own house and car, and pay all my bills. I work full-time with mentally disabled children, which is sometimes very stressful. On my weekends off, my fiance, and I will go out to the club, or go down to the city to a big rave to dance and have fun. I usually take just 1 pill a night, but have never taken more than 4 pills in a whole weekend, and I have been doing this just about every week for almost 9 months.

When I am on Ecstasy, it is the best feeling in the world. I become more open to people and to myself, and everything just feels good and right. I'll sit down and look at all the other people having fun, and smile. Because that's what it is. It makes everybody happy and love each other, and if used safely, it will never take anyone's life.

I have never had a bad experience while "rolling." And I have never felt depressed or sad the next day. Actually I still feel like I'm coming down from the roll; relaxed and warm. A very happy feeling, almost like you're glowing. And if excessive, continuous use of Ecstasy will lead to a decrease in serotonin axons, then you must have to eat several pills a day, for several weeks in a row, because I have not noticed any changes in mood or memory in myself or anyone else.

Ecstasy is not a hallucinogen or a stimulant. It is in a category called Entactogens, which literally means "touching within." It lowers your fear response, so that you can connect with people you never thought you could.

It should never be placed in the same category as heroin, crack, cocaine, or any other drug like these, because it simply is not the same. It is not addictive, and when used safely, you will never die from it. You will only die from the fake pills that are being made everywhere.

So, being an adult, who has enjoyed using Ecstasy responsibly, I pose a question to anyone who thinks that it should be illegal...WHY??????????

Because people are dying from it???.....WRONG!!!!!!

Anyone who has died from using Ecstasy died because they either 1) combined it with other more dangerous drugs (ketamine, GHB, speed, or coke), 2) did not follow the safety precautions such as drinking water, and taking breaks from dancing to cool down (following these safety precautions are equivalent to not drinking and driving, except that is worse because the lives of everyone else on the road are at stake) 3) ingesting 14 pills or more all at once, because that is considered a lethal dose (what would happen to a small child if they got into a bottle of aspirin and swallowed the same amount? Probably a lethal dose as well) or 4) took a pill that was actually something else, such as DXM, PMA, or DOB. All it takes is one of these pills to kill you. I have never allowed my fiance, or anyone else that I know to take a pill without me testing it first. I bought a test-kit through DanceSafe, and it has saved our lives more than once.

Also, if Ecstasy was manufactured legally by the government, this would not be an issue. All the pills would be regulated by the FDA, and then nobody would have to die.

In addition to these facts, the government claims that MDMA has no therapeutic use in the medical world, yet they continue to keep it in Schedule I, which outlaws any research or medical testing. Wouldn't it be a better idea to place it in Schedule III, allow for research on the therapeutic uses as an adjunct to psychotherapy, instead of just testing for negative effects on rats? Which, by the way, rats have a brain about the size of a gumball, so any effects that MDMA has on them is really unrelated to the actual effects on people.

I would also like to point out a few more flaws with the placement of certain drugs in this society. The government will not allow responsible adults to use a non-addictive, relatively safe substance that makes people happy and content, but they will allow people to drink alcohol which for alcoholics, is more addictive than heroin. These people will then start to get sick with cirrhosis of the liver, jaundice, and Hepatitis B. My father was an alcoholic who eventually needed to be put in detox for 6 months because the addiction was so bad. And 10 years later, with more drinking his liver gave out and he needed a liver transplant. But this "safe" drug is still legal and is easy to get into the hands of any child. I drank my first beer at the age of 10, and was drunk for the first time at 13, yet Ecstasy seems to be a huge epidemic.

The drug of choice for my father was really cigarettes. And this eventually killed him. He would smoke 2 packs a day, but at the time it seemed like alcohol was more of the enemy. Two years after his liver transplant (it was successful, but our insurance wouldn't cover it because it was alcohol related, my mom had to come up with \$500,000.00 for just the operation, not including the \$300.00 worth of medicine he had to take a day to keep his

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body from rejecting the liver) my Dad was diagnosed with lung cancer. They tried one operation to remove the portion of the lung with the tumor, but by that time it had already spread to his other lung. They gave him a month to live. He lasted 5 days. I was 12 years old.

Cigarettes have absolutely no medical uses at all. And Quite the contrary, regular smokers will die of some kind of smoking related disease. Does't anyone read the labels??? Smoking will cause lung cancer, emphysema, heart disease and fatal birth defects. People die from these, every minute, of every day. Second-hand smoke is probably more likely to kill someone than 1 pill of Ecstasy.

I am in no way suggesting that alcohol and cigarettes be illegal as well, it won't work anyway (look at prohibition in the early 1900's) also the government would hate to lose those taxes on these DRUGS. But doesn't anyone see, that even though more money is going into all these Anti- Club Drug Acts, and the sentencing times are increasing, that the amount of production, importation, selling, buying, and using of Ecstasy is still climbing steadily.

Not only is the government not winning the war on Ecstasy, it appears to be making it worse. The culture surrounding this drug used to be strictly the gay community during the 1970's and early 1980's. That is when it was still legal. Once DEA Administrator Lawn pushed it into Schedule I in 1986, it disappeared and then started showing up in the underground rave scene. But today it has spread even further than that. You can hear 2 of America's most popular rappers have new songs that mention Ecstasy use; Eminem and Jah Rule.

Perhaps the answer is not in the tightening of controls on the substance, but in the loosening and understanding of it. Maybe if we take the time to look at both the positive and negative effects (not just the negative) of MDMA, and see where it's place is in modern medicine, then maybe it will be a little more respected by society. And then maybe the government won't feel so obligated to put scare tactics on the people of America, because Ecstasy won't be that scary any more. (By the way, all the "negative" effects of Ecstasy that are listed on the NIDA (National Institute of Drug Abuse) website are no worse than any of the side effects of the drugs that are in the Physician's Desk Reference; they also coincidentally do not name any of the positive effects of MDMA, especially the feelings of empathy and love... go figure!!)

There will always be a demand for MDMA, whether it is for it's therapeutic use in some psychiatrist's office, or to go to a rave and enjoy yourself and the company of others. I just feel that it is unjust to not allow those who can act responsibly to use a substance that they feel has total positive effects. Doesn't the phrase "Freedom of Choice" mean that you have the right to decide for yourself??? Think about it. Thank you.

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specmind

From: <Thescarletstar@aol.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2001 9:45 AM
Subject: correct information

I am writing in response to the inaccuracies in the proposed ecstasy law. It has been represented to the Commission that Ecstasy (i.e., MDMA, MDEA, MDA and PMA) is similar in its hallucinogenic effect on the user to mescaline. Also it has been described as having an added stimulant component that can elevate heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature. It has also been suggested that the drug is neither physically nor psychologically addictive. The proposed amendment treats Ecstasy as being of comparable seriousness to heroin, providing a marihuana equivalency for Ecstasy that is the same as heroin. Accordingly, for sentencing purposes, 1 GM of Ecstasy will be the equivalent of 1 kg of marihuana. I think it is ridiculous to treat ecstasy in the same manner as heroin. They are in no way alike, and in no way equally serious the Commission treat Ecstasy as being of comparable seriousness to powder cocaine (which would result in a marihuana equivalency for Ecstasy of 200 GM) or methamphetamine mixture (which would result in a marihuana equivalency for Ecstasy of 2 kg). Still incorrect. Ecstasy is not comparable to cocaine either. The penalty, I think, should be comparable to that for mescaline (which would result in a marihuana equivalency for Ecstasy of 10 GM). Regarding whether the Drug Quantity Table in section 2D1.1 should be revised with respect to Ecstasy I think that all of these laws and revisions of laws and charts will not help. We need to provide education to the public about the risks and effects of the drug. This will scare away some, and those who will do it anyway will have the information to be safe as they do it.

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specmind

From: "Danny Yavuzkurt" <ady1@psu.edu>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2001 10:02 AM
Subject: Ecstasy sentencing guidelines are patently ridiculous
 The new Ecstasy sentencing guidelines being considered are patently ridiculous and should never have been proposed in the first place.

Ecstasy is in no way comparable to marijuana, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines (even though it is chemically similar), or any other drug. Ecstasy is what cognitive scientists refer to as an "empathic entheogen," meaning that the main function of the drug is to increase empathy and interpersonal relations, making the user feel "at one" with everyone around him/her. There is no causal relationship between Ecstasy use and:

- violence
- physical addiction
- danger to self and others in general,

EXCEPT for its well-known and easily combated hyperthermic effects. Many of the deaths attributed to 'Ecstasy' were in fact caused by PMA or other drugs masquerading as E. In effect, by treating E as if it were responsible for the deaths, and thus as 'dangerous' as heroin, the Sentencing Commission completely disregards the truth in this matter, and is acting more out of a desire for political capital - seeming to 'crack down' on drug use is always desirable when a new presidential administration comes to power, especially one as in need of legitimacy as Bush's.

This new sentencing guideline, that will put thousands or tens of thousands of nonviolent, nonaddicted people, most of them young, college-age or younger, behind bars for years, is nothing more than a crass political machination, and takes advantage of a shortened public comment window and the calculation that many of those affected by this new law will never know of its existence until it is too late. It is truly shameful to enact a guideline that will massively increase criminality of a drug that is only dangerous to the user him/herself, putting young people behind bars for much of their lives, simply to further a political agenda of looking 'tough'.

The Sentencing Commission, if it truly believed in protecting the public interest, would concern itself with finding ways to stop nonviolent, nondangerous drug use before it starts, and treat it, when it occurs, not as a criminal act, but simply as a recreational act, like smoking, that comes with its own set of dangers and consequences, which individuals may consider consciously, and act of their own free will in deciding how to use their bodies.

Enacting this guideline is nothing short of declaring war on a generation, nothing short of seeing the world through black-and-white glasses, where everything labeled a 'drug' is evil, and those who use them are forever labeled 'criminals'. You cannot change the hearts minds of the people

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through threats and force - and that you have chosen, once again, to fight the 'war' against drugs' as if it were a war against the citizens.

Shame on you.

Danny Yavuzkurt

Student, Penn State University, department of Information Science and Technology

ady1@psu.edu

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2/4/2001

specmind

From: <ZenMichael@aol.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2001 10:26 AM
Subject: Notes to Sentencing Commission
Dear Madam or Sir,

I am a former ecstasy user and would like to comment on the information submitted to you.

- 1) Ecstasy is not a hallucinogenic drug. It does not alter visual perception in any way.
- 2) Ecstasy is psychologically addictive to some people, but no more so than alcohol. Your sources are correct that Ecstasy is not physically addictive.
- 3) The potency of ecstasy as a mood enhancer is analogous to marijuana. It does not approach heroin, cocaine or even mescaline in its ability to alter mood. Sentencing should reflect that one dose of ecstasy (approx. 150 mg) = one dose of marijuana (? g)

Sincerely,
Michael Foster
2401 Park Blvd. #6
Oakland, CA 94606-1576

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2/4/2001

specmind

From: "kim hanna" <onegreenday@hotmail.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Saturday, February 03, 2001 10:17 PM
Subject: letter for Sentencing Commission
Dear Sentencing Commission,

I would urge you NOT to make the penalties for Ecstasy on a par with heroin; as they are not even remotely related in terms of drug danger. Once again our Congress clamors for tougher prison terms as a means to control drug use; when all such past attempts have failed miserably. We've got prisons full (2million) of drug offenders yet America has more pure, more kinds and cheaper drugs available; than ever before. That plan has failed and I don't want Ecstasy penalties equal to heroin.

If you must increase the penalties, I would equate Ecstasy with mescaline and treat it the same; Ecstasy of 1 gram equal to 10 grams of marijuana.

Switzerland's highest court ruled that Ecstasy was not a dangerous drug and was by most accounts used responsibly by people, without promoting criminal acts.

They said Ecstasy should be considered a 'soft drug', less dangerous than heroin or cocaine dangerous.

If you take some time and read the accounts of Ecstasy used in psychological therapy here in the U.S., when it was legal; you'll find that it had much success and had minimal side effects (when used properly) or dangerous reactions.

At this moment, Spain is either testing or setting up testing for Ecstasy in trials to see if it should be made available to the public under doctor supervision. Here our Congress wants to lock you up and toss the key away.

Rick Doblin a graduate of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government who founded the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies said: Ecstasy 'helps people accept difficult emotions and it helps us learn about self love, openness to others, and openness to critical feedback. We shouldn't push this underground; we should study this intensely.'

I once again urge the Sentencing Commission to refrain from drug war hysteria and look to the science for the purported danger of Ecstasy vs it's many reported successes. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kim Hanna, 3 Eames Road, Worcester, MA 01606

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2/4/2001

specmind

From: [REDACTED]
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2001 1:29 PM
Subject: Ecstasy Sentencing
Dear Sir,

Please consider this as my written statement concerning the Sentencing Committee's upcoming decision concerning the sentencing of those convicted of possessing or trafficking in MDMA (and similar drugs). Also, are these comments anonymous? If not, can this comment be made anonymous? If anonymity is impossible though, please submit my response anyway.

thank you,

[REDACTED]

Members of the Commission,

These comments are in response to the proposed alteration of the Drug Schedule to increase penalties for possession and trafficking of MDMA, MDEA, MDA, and PMA. Under the proposal, these drugs will be equated with heroin for sentencing purposes. Please reconsider this decision, as MDMA and heroin are clearly in two different leagues.

MDMA is not hallucinogenic, as is stated in the Commission's report. Of the various people I know who use or have used MDMA in pure form, none have ever experience hallucinations and neither have I. A drug that acts the way MDMA does should not be treated as heroin. I have never tried heroin, and I never plan to try heroin. Heroin is highly addictive and severely damaging to the body. Of the MDMA users I know, none have ever even considered using heroin. On the other hand, MDMA is not physically or psychologically addictive. MDMA use results in an intense euphoria and a general acceptance of everyone and everything around. MDMA users are not violent, in fact, users tend to be very loving and open about their emotions. MDMA is non-lethal. Fake "ecstasy" though, can be cut with anything including, but not limited to, heroin, cocaine, ketamine, and PCP. Any pill passing as ecstasy that contains these drugs is dangerous to the user. MDMA, however, is not. Other ecstasy-like drugs such as MDEA, MDA, and PMA however, can be fatal. In your final decision, please bear in mind that MDMA is non-addictive and non-fatal. I would like to see penalties increased for MDEA, MDA, and PMA, as they are dangerous. Of the three, PMA is the most dangerous and should receive the largest increase of the drugs. If an increase is inevitable, please consider equating these drugs with mescaline because, clearly, MDMA falls well short of drugs such as cocaine and heroin.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,
A

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2/4/2001

specmind

From: "Debi Jasen" <debif@hotmail.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2001 8:46 AM
Subject: Ecstasy

Dear Sentencing Commission:

As a third year college student, I have seen a tremendous amount of drug use. As you may know, heroin is gaining popularity in the Northwest region of the U.S. I went to school in that area, and I can tell you all about the damage done by heroin. Although I spent the first twenty-one years of my life in a suburb of D.C, I have never seen as many addicts as I did in the Northwest. My friends would try all sorts of "cool" drugs, and ecstasy was one of them. Not one of my friends, roommates, or acquaintances became addicted to ecstasy. However, we did have some serious problems with heroin addiction. Ecstasy was a temporary high. Some of my friends would take it to help with their studies, others took it when they were going to a club or a party. Ecstasy was a group drug for them. However, heroin, in my experience, became more of a private drug. Many of my friends wouldn't touch heroin because they were afraid of becoming addicted. There is a tremendous difference between heroin and ecstasy: a difference in the effects, a difference in the addiction rate, a difference in the impact it has on one's life. If you treat ecstasy as heroin, with the same punishments, and act as though it's just as scary and evil, you will lose even more of your war on drugs. Young people don't trust the government's message very much these days. They've learned that marijuana isn't going to destroy them. They've learned that a hit of acid won't put them in the psycho ward. And they've learned that they have little to fear from Ecstasy. If you tell them that Ecstasy is as evil as heroin, they will believe that heroin isn't so bad after all. You will lose even more young people than you already have lost. Please, do more research on these drugs, and discover the major differences yourself.

Sincerely,
Debi Jasen
Maryland
debif@hotmail.com

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specmind

From: "Kathy McLeod" <klmcleod@ev1.net>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2001 1:12 PM
Subject: Ecstasy Sentencing

I am opposed to the increase of punishment for MDMA offenses. This substance is not the same as heroin and is not an addictive substance as heroin, we know, is. There is no justification whatsoever to classify this substance in the same category as heroin and impose such punishment.

I am vehemently opposed to this proposed punishment increase.

Kathy McLeod
Houston, TX.

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specmind

From: "Eddie Codel" <eddie@eddie.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2001 9:38 AM
Subject: MDMA public comments

Dear Sentencing Commission,

This past weekend I attended a conference on 'The State of Ecstasy' in San Francisco, California. After listening to a number of medical doctors, psychologists and researchers present their results of research into MDMA, I am convinced that this a drug with definite medical potential, and not nearly as dangerous as is often represented in the media and by our Congress. Much work needs to be done yet to accurately determine how MDMA affects human beings and what the long-term consequences of abuse are. Nonetheless, I am convinced this is a drug that needs balanced consideration before determining that it's worth taking peoples' lives away for its abuse.

Given the evidence and record to date, it would be inhumane to classify MDMA at the same level as heroin. Heroin is by far, a much more dangerous drug, both in physical and emotional addiction. It would be more fair to classify MDMA at the same level as mescaline, for several reasons. From all accounts MDMA, does not appear to be physically or emotionally addictive, and it has been reported that it has some similar hallucinogenic effects.

Please consider this issue fairly and without prejudice as we have much to learn and little to gain for locking up more people for longer periods of time for something we know too little about.

Thank you for your time in this matter.

Eddie Codel
San Francisco, CA

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2/5/2001

specmind

From: "Kristen Calvo" <kristenlia@hotmail.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2001 9:52 AM
Subject: MDMA in a class of its own.
Hi,

My opinion on the drug ecstasy is this. . . I have talked to many doctors on the subject of MDMA and the long term effects of the drug, which none have been found. I have also talked to doctors about the addiction part of it for this particular drug there has found to be no addictive characteristics. So I do not understand how you guys are trying to say that it is on the same level as heroin. MDMA is not addictive. MDMA has never been proved a killer. All MDMA does is give people a false feeling of euphoria. If you are going to try and find a mind altering substance that has the closest effect you'd be better off comparing it to alcohol minus the violence alcohol incurs among some individuals. So I really don't understand why you don't just restrict MDMA as you have with alcohol. Even though Alcohol is addictive and has been proven to kill still it remains legal. While MDMA is non-addictive and has never killed anyone it remains illegal. If you want MDMA to remain illegal until more is found out than you should class it with Marijuana or in a class of its own.

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2/5/2001

specmind

From: "Robert Cashion" <trebor@justice.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2001 9:59 AM
Subject: De-criminalize Ecstasy

Ecstasy far less dangerous than Heroin. You don't shoot it with a needle. No matter how much you do it doesn't get you high after more than 2 days. Most users use 1 or 2 pills at an event and many only every few weeks or even months. Heroin, even if your chipping is used at least several times a week, usually several times a day. It is often injected with needles. The high hits you so fast you can OD on the spot. Heroin is bought on the streets from people who try to gaffle you even knowing that you'll get sick physically if you don't get more. Ecstasy is distributed amongst friends through safer channels. It is consumed at events that can watch out for someone should something happen (just as bars watch all the drunks). People can do E and go to bed and go to work. If you're doing Heroin there is an adjustment period - you either get sick, depressed or both or you do more and boom you get hooked.

I have never heard of an EUI but there are 1000's of DUI's why is alcohol not banned (and cigarettes and caffeine) it causes violence and disease and deaths? You have drunkards running through the neighborhood peeing and puking and kicking things. I would much rather have a bunch of people dancing, laughing and hugging at a club, party event, rave.

Robert Cashion

1230 Market St. #629

San Francisco, CA 94102

trebor@justice.com

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2/5/2001

specmind

From: "Dan Aeberhard" <dan@aeberhard.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Saturday, February 03, 2001 9:43 PM
Subject: Penalty Structure for Ecstasy

Dear Commission Members,

I and most of the people I know are very, very concerned about the current situation with relation to the upgrade of sentencing guidelines for Ecstasy offenders and the current status of Ecstasy as a schedule I narcotic. My feeling is that small (under 5KG) Ecstasy offenders should be treated no more seriously than Marijuana offenders and that putting Ecstasy offenders on par with serious hallucinogenic substances like LSD and ultra-addictive and dangerous drugs like PCP and Heroin is a major mistake and will only increase the number of small-time offenders that will go to jail with major-offender sentences.

More specifically, I urge you to keep small amounts (under 5G) of Ecstasy on par with Marijuana at Level 6 (250G).

ONLY people carrying LARGE (above 5KG) amounts of Ecstasy should be punished severely (comparable to a narcotic like Heroin) for intent to traffic and distribute at a high level, as these people carry the real danger for society and our fellow citizens.

I thank you for your consideration of my thoughts and opinion.

respectfully,

Dan Aeberhard
Los Angeles, California

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2/4/2001

specmind

From: <Junglegurley@aol.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Saturday, February 03, 2001 8:48 PM
Subject: a note on the new MDMA proposation

Hey..... I just want to add my comments on the new amendment that is being proposed regarding MDMA and what other drugs it is compared to (the new bill that would make 1 gram of MDMA equal to 1,000 grams of marajuna). Now, I know you do not care what I have to say, and anything that I have to say is not going to amount to anything anyways. But, I think this is completely silly. Yes, drugs are a problem in America. Yes, drugs are bad for you. I'm not about to argue with you on those issues. However, I feel that this is just taking the drug war a little bit too far. All drugs are different and carry different side effects and it is silly to compare MDMA to heroin. I am well aware that there are dangerous effects to the drug(as with alcohol and cigarettes and cholesterol and sodium, etc., etc.) However, if people want to make educated choices, **THAT DO NOT HURT ANYONE ELSE (IM NOT TALKING ABOUT GOING OUT AND SELLING DRUGS TO SCHOOL KIDS)**, but the choice of what they put into their own body, as long as it does not hurt anyone else, then that is their choice. Most people know the risks, but what is it the concern of anyone else really? Plus, MDMA does have certain therapeutic value, and was once legal and used for those things. Many well-educated psychotrists and doctors experimented with it, and there have been known positive effects, just like negative effects. Just like sunlight is good for you, but too much sun can cause cancer. Now, just on a closing note, I'm not arguing over whether drug use is good or bad, but I'm saying more money and time should be put into education about the subject, instead of harsher consequences, which pretty much result out of fear.

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2/4/2001

specmind

From: "Gustafson, Jonathan W" <Jonathan.W.Gustafson@uwsp.edu>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Saturday, February 03, 2001 12:34 PM
Subject: regarding ecstasy

To whom it may concern (besides myself)

A little about my self first. I'm currently going to college. I don't drink and I don't use tobacco and I'm in great health. I don't feel that ecstasy is anywhere near as serious as heroin, and I think that to make it the equivalent of heroin would be a serious mistake. I've tried this drug, but I haven't tried heroin (nor do I ever intend to). Ecstasy when taken in normal doses just induces a feeling of love and compassion (not sex, but peace), it doesn't make people go mad, it doesn't even make them drive bad. The only real side effect I noticed was I wasn't quite as happy the next day (the ecstasy version of a hangover) but that soon went away.

It seems that there's a pattern here, when they (the government) wanted to first make marijuana illegal and then again in the late 70's crack down on it they rolled out with many of studies on how horrible it was, and all the dammaging side-effects, while at the same time (in the 70's) the American Medical Association (one of the few truly impartial organizations, at least back then) was calling for immediate legalization. Now it's happening again.

It doesn't matter what the consequences are, the word that's spread among teenagers is that this is a relatively benign drug when used occasionally so many will still want to try it, and the supply will still strive to meet the demand. The only result I can see coming of this will be overcrowded prisons full of harmless people being put next to child molesters and killers. I'm just submitting this because I'd hate to see this happen, to have so many peoples lives ruined not by occasionally looking for an experiance but by the consequences an unknowing government puts down on its' people. I urge you to reconsider this step that may be taken. It's time we called a truce in the war on drugs, a war on our own people, and try to work with them instead of against.

Thank you for hopefully taking this into consideration,

Jon Gustafson

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2/4/2001

specmind

From: "John Mullican" <John_Mullican@UPN.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Friday, February 02, 2001 1:08 PM
Subject: Penalties for Ecstasy use
February 2, 2001

To Whom It May Concern,

The penalties of making "Ecstasy" equivalent to heroin is an outlandish and ridiculous proposal for many reasons, but primarily the basis of this proposed amendment's math does NOT compute with other federal drug offenses.

To prove this point statistically, currently 1 gram of mescaline is equated to 10 grams of marijuana for the same federal punishment by law. Now, to equate 1 gram of MDMA ("Ecstasy") to 1000 grams of marijuana for the same punishment? This sends a ridiculous message of choosing the lessor of two substances for ultimately the same effect. Ecstasy is bad, but marijuana is okay? This hypocritical approach with federal measurements of Ecstasy is clearly a political move to the current media hunger for Ecstasy news because of the drugs growing popularity within our culture.

Sadly, statistically this proposed amendment will do nothing but scare more people to hide than to seek treatment. Because of its obvious imbalance of measurement to other federal drug policies, I urge this proposed amendment NOT be approved.

Sincerely,

John Mullican
400 S. Ogden Dr.
LA, CA 90036

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2/4/2001

specmind

From: <ALifeLessOrdinary@aol.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2001 10:21 PM
Subject: New Ecstasy Law

Hello, my name is Scott Jackson and I am a Psychology major for my third year at Modesto Junior College. I don't believe that Ecstasy should be considered on the same level as Heroin for several reasons addressed below.

First of all, I believe that this law is being passed in favor of Middle Class America, who, for the majority, believe that drugs cause nothing but harm. Which, in most cases are true, but there are some exceptions that can't be ignored (I'll talk about that below). Back to the subject, raves and Ecstasy have not been in the limelight until millions of teenagers from Middle Class America started rampaging blindly into the scene. Then, you started having tons of overdoses and deaths. But in reality, it wasn't the drugs that were killing them, it was irresponsibility and poor judgement. The media and the American public generally do not care about problems occurring in the country until it affects them. Schools in low income urban areas have been full of violence such as stabbings and shootings for a very long time, no one made a big deal about it until it happened at Columbine, the average-American type of high school. Then it became a tragedy, then the American public started to take notice, and sadly, no one really cared until it affected them, as Columbine did. The same is true with the rave scene and Ecstasy. When it was really underground, and it was a selective elite group of urban dwellers that went and actually combined it with Ecstasy responsibly, no one cared, but once they became more mainstream and hordes of Middle Class high schoolers were disappearing all night long and coming back warped out of their minds, that's when people started to care.

When the Columbine killings happened, it became a media frenzy, and suddenly schools all across the country (including mine) were receiving bomb threats. The media had created a disaster. In this same way, the media had a large part to do with the drug problem with the rave scene, now. Specials like 20/20 and Dateline started doing specials on the "Killer Rave Scene", they basically put out the message that raves were free-for-all drug-fests. In turn, this attracted millions of people who thought that drugs were what raves were all about (As a side note, anyone who really knows what's up on the rave scene knows that it is not about the drugs. People who come for the drugs are the misinformed results of the media coverage, who are ruining it for those who actually want to go there to dance.). When millions of teenagers started turning to raves because they thought it was all about drugs, it filled them with even more drug sellers and drug users. This caused more over-doses, deaths, drug dealers, etc. So once the problem escalated, they do more reports on how bad the drug scene is. Again, they advertise it like a drug fest and it attracts more people who come for the drugs, and it works in a vicious circle.

So now, people are wanting to crack down on Ecstasy sellers and users. What I think the general public is unaware of, is that a law like this will be putting their own teenagers in jail. Drug dealers don't fit into a stereotype. They don't consider themselves 'drug dealers' in the same way that Law Enforcement does. They look at it like doing their friends a favor,

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who want it and making some easy money on the side. I've seen 15 year olds selling Ecstasy at raves, before. I've seen a 13 year old selling weed. They don't look at it as a major crime like the rest of America does. To pass this law on Ecstasy will put a lot of teenagers behind bars and destroy a lot of families. But I guarantee you one thing; if this law does get passed, you're going to see a whole lot of young Middle American youth get put behind bars and the parents who voted for a law like this to get passed will start to wonder what the hell they just did. Their whole "Do it for the children" campaign that seems to be going on will suddenly be under serious restructuring because what most people don't realize is that it is THEIR children that are doing it!

To summarize all that, the media chooses to focus on things the general middle class American public cares about. The general public doesn't care about anything until it affects them and their families. They've been led to believe that a crackdown on drugs, especially in the rave scene will save their children, when all it will do is put more of their children in jail because there are a lot more teenagers out there, especially in high school, that are doing these things behind their parents' backs. When parents think of a crack-down on drug dealers, most of them think of the stereotypical drug dealer, usually a gang member or a thug, etc. I think that these parents would be shocked to find out that the very people they're trying to put behind bars. . . are their own children.

On a second note, I have seen Ecstasy turn some people's lives completely around for the better. Those who know how to use it responsibly (not 13 year old girls who don't drink enough water and don't know when their limit is) have actually been able to learn from it and make very positive changes in their lives. The textbook descriptions of Ecstasy's effects do not come close to explaining how it actually feels. You are not self-conscious about anything, you are no longer shy, you do not feel anxiety and you feel like you have more self esteem at that moment than in your entire life. People who suffer from Depression and taken felt like they finally got woken up out of their mental prison. They finally got a glimpse of what it felt like to feel good about themselves. And it motivated them to start changing in order to feel that way without the drug. I have seen people who were completely thugged-out, always trying to look tough and act like something short of Conduct Disorder. And once they got introduced into the rave scene, and Ecstasy, it completely changed their entire perspective of life, for the better. He dropped the thug act, he became a lot more outgoing and friendly, and even accomplished the biggest taboo in America: accepting gays as people! His experience with that drug opened his eyes to the positive aspects of life and made him realize that the mean and tough thug act is completely ridiculous! These are just some examples of the positive aspects of these drugs.

To be fair, I have also seen it consume people. I have seen people ruin their lives because of this drug, but it was not because of the drug, it was because of their irresponsibility. People can learn from drugs like Ecstasy, or they can use it as an escape from reality. People who try to learn from their experience and use it to motivate them for positive changes in their lives have done so very successfully. Those who want to use it as an escape from reality, also do it successfully. So much, in fact that they lose all touch with reality and permanently destroy their lives for ever. It

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is a very sad thing to see, especially when you see that happen to your friends, but again, it is not a drug problem, it is a lack-of-awareness and irresponsibility problem.

I also believe that with the ammount of Congressmen, ex-Presidents, Law Enforcement, etc. that are closeted drug users, I feel that it would be very hypocritical to pass a law like this. I think that doing so would basically just send the message that they can do it because they're above the law, but we can't because we are simply citizens.

In conclusion, I believe that passing a law like this will not stop drug use or its traffic, it will simply put more people in jail, and I think we have enough people in them already. I think that jails should be reserved for those with a violent crime. Building more schools than prisons would be a nice alternative. A real drug awareness program that could succeed where DARE failed, would be another alternative. I also believe that it is a person's right to do to their body what they want to. People know that Ecstasy is bad for them. We know that it screws up the brain, so if it's thier body, why can't they do what they want with it? Of all the drugs in the world, Ecstasy is absolutely on the bottom of the list as far as causing violence. Ecstasy makes you want to be friendly and peaceful. Alcahol has been proned to instigate violence, and it is even worse for your memory than marijuana, yet it is legal. Ecstasy is bad for you, I'm not saying otherwise, but I believe that if people want to screw up their lives like that, let them. It is their choice. People can screw up their lives real quick by gambling or drinking, yet they are considered American Pasttimes! To put a euphoria-inducing drug such as Ecstasy on the same level as Heroin is completely rediculous. People on Heroin are on it becaues they are addicted. People take Ecstasy because they enjoy the euphoric feeling it brings and the freindly attitude it gives them. Why make a drug like that more illegal when alcahahol incites violence?

I hope that whoever reads this has made it this far, and I'm not sure whether or not this letter will make a difference, but I hope that you understand the points that I am trying to make and will actually think about what I have said. I believe strongly in everything I've said and I hope that this letter becomes the one drop in the bucket that changes the scales against passing this new law. Thank you for your time,

Scott Jackson

[178]

2/4/2001

specmind

From: "E&P File Server" <TimothyM@Divanet.net>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2001 5:43 PM
Attach: ATT00235.dat; resum_.dat
Subject: ecstasy sentencing
Sentencing Commision,

I have been opposed to the war on drugs since i was a child. I believe it puts non-violent drug offenders behind bars for far to long and actually a conspiracy to ensure that people of color and youth do not have the chance to educational, career and voting rights. I have been working in the field of drug addiction for six years and have yet to come across an abuser of ecstasy. I blieve that all drugs should be decriminilazied and treatment on demand should be available to anyone who desires it. I also feel that drug substitute thaerapy is an avenue that has not been explored. At bottom i think that the cange in sentencing laws around ecstasy are an effort to ensure that the powers that be continmue to make money in the recording industry and alternative forms of music are made inaccessible.

sincerely - timothy maroni

[179]

2/4/2001

specmind

From: <Jmraspa@aol.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Saturday, February 03, 2001 9:17 PM
Subject: New MDMA Regulations

I think that your new proposal for treating MDMA as a drug equivalent to heroin is ridiculous. Heroin is a drug that stays in your system for life, causing a person to continually crave it for the rest of their life. MDMA, on the other hand, is not addictive, a one time drug, that a person can live without. The longterm effects of MDMA are minimal compared to the longterm effects of heroin. it does not take another powerful drug to help someone stop using MDMA. Heroin requires iron determination, or a methadone script, which can be worse than heroin. Also, treating drugs like marijuana or tobacco as a less harmful or addicting substance is another example of the government's blind eye toward recognizing a potential threat to society. One of my friends is addicted to marijuana, and has ruined his life. Many of my other friends take MDMA, and I have not seen an effect on them equal to the effect marijuana has on my friend. if the government decides to crack down on drugs, they should start with drugs that lead to worse, more ruinous drugs, like marijuana, tobacco, alcohol, and other substances that are more accessible than MDMA, and is more prevalent in the U.S. MDMA is like having cake at a party. We eat it rarely, but when we do, it's something to enjoy, not to abuse. A gram of heroin does much more damage than a gram of MDMA.

Sincerely,

The Concerned Public

[180]

2/4/2001

specmind

From: "Norm Silverman" <normsilver@pdq.net>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2001 5:37 PM
Subject: ecstasy

Ecstasy should be punished per abuse unit. Ecstasy has a very narrow dosage window i.e. – not enough and the user experiences no effect – too much and it doesn't substantially alter the effect. I believe the threshold for effectiveness is about 100 mg. Ecstasy should therefore be punished like LSD: by dosage unit. It is in no way in the same ball park as heroin. It is not addictive – in fact it has been used by psychotherapists to treat alcoholism and other addictions in the therapeutic environment. Its success in this respect is due to the insight it provides users. While its long term effects are not known, Ecstasy does not really lend itself to habitual usage like cocaine or meth, so it's much less likely to be physically harmful. Andrew Weil and others have written at length regarding ecstasy's beneficial potential in the field of psychotherapy. I will try to find sites for the articles and refer them within the time allotted.

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2/1/2001

specmind

From: "Wayne Radinsky" <wradinsky@yahoo.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2001 9:10 PM
Subject: Re: Ecstasy Sentencing Alert

Hi. I'm responding to the request for public comments on ecstasy (MDMA) sentencing.

What I would like to say is that, to my knowledge, ecstasy is either nonaddictive or much less addictive than heroin, which is one of the most addictive drugs that exists. It does not cause violent behavior, like drugs such as cocaine or methamphetamine. And while research into its health effects are ongoing, and it is not clear how much harm a given amount of the drug or the frequency of use actually causes, it does seem very clear that ecstasy is not as harmful to its users health as heroin. If it were, there would be much more evidence of harm from the research community than we actually see.

It seems to me that in order to justify harsh punishment, either a drug must be extremely addictive, or extremely harmful, or cause its users to behave in ways that make them a danger to others. There are drugs that do those things, but to the best of my knowledge, ecstasy is not one of them.

It seems to me like ecstasy is more appropriately classified with mescaline, or perhaps LSD. Ecstasy is not related to heroin chemically or in its effects in any way. I would encourage the commission to view ecstasy as more related to mescaline, or possibly to LSD, in its effects, and chemistry. Comparisons to heroin are completely inappropriate.

Sincerely,
Wayne

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February 3, 2001

To whom it may concern:

Interesting, yet ridiculous efforts by the Sentencing Commission when you consider how many *innocent* people are killed each year by drunk drivers in the namesake of their drug, alcohol; and by cigarette smokers in the namesake of their drug, nicotine - which has been deemed as difficult to quit as heroin. Regrettably, I guess it helps to have your own political lobby in Washington.

If you truly care about lives, put your efforts and money into better causes like rehabilitation and education. So much more could be accomplished by letting people make truly educated decisions about their own bodies. Each person has the liberty to do with their body what they desire, as long as it does not hurt me in the process. Please stop wasting my tax dollars on a drug war and scare tactics using outlandish sentencing, when it is obviously a no win situation and never could be - ie. prohibition.

Please consider appropriate sentencing based on the effects of actions upon other's and not ourselves. I see Ecstasy as no more of a threat than being caught under the influence of alcohol, nor should it be any more severe than that.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A concerned American citizen.

Keith B. Molter
Chicago, IL

specmind

From: [REDACTED]
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Friday, February 02, 2001 12:32 PM
Subject: xtc Sentencing

Please fwd my thoughts to the appropriate peoples... please do not include my email address.

MDMA in the last few years has shown a huge outbreak in urban/suburban America. Who is doing Extacy, why, and who is supplying it? I can only say what I know to be true. People who use extacy moderatly find that it changes their lives in the most positive of ways. This drug helps people understand themselves better than any prozac or doctor ever could. It only helps peoples' lives who use it responsibly. Those who abuse it do so not because it is addictive but because they will abuse anything since their attitude toward life is one of escape instead of expansion. Illegalizing MDMA and stronger sentancing will not help the underlying problem of these people. It prevents the theraputic effects that so many intelligent people achieve with it's help. You then offer no other alternative to MDMA. The next issue is

"Who is providing it?" MDMA used to be provided through responsible doctors to those who could benifit from it's effects. Since it's scheduling, pure MDMA has become very rare. It is not the threat you fear so greatly. Large organized crime families have caught onto the trend of Extacy Pills and from out of the country they press any amount of impure and destructive chemicals into a pill that they sell on the streets of America as Extacy (hardly ever MDMA.) All of this has come about since the scheduling of MDMA. Now use is on the rise. Not because of MDMA, but because the government has scheduled MDMA, and more unhealthy substitutes have been flooding this country advertised as MDMA. This is the problem. MDMA is not the problem. Pure MDMA has never shown unhealthy effects in any moderate user. ever. To say you have evidence otherwise is falty and inaccurate. The only time negative effects are shown is when it is really not MDMA or it is mixed with other posing drugs advertised as MDMA. Education(not propaganda) and de-criminalization are the only tools you can ever use to help people. It is commonly known that the criminalization of psychedelics is not done out of rationalization and understanding. It is ovious that it is done out of extreme ignorance and fear. It is hastily legislated by those who misunderstand the situation completely. It is done by those who act out of theory instead of experience. The scheduling of psychedelics is legislated by those who have never tried the drug and know nothing about the reality of the situation while insisting on preventing others from exploring themselves. The criminalization of individuals who use drugs is an effort to warehouse those in our society that are thinking for themselves and expanding their minds. The goal of criminalizing drugs is to turn these self-determined, innocent, and harmless people into a salve work force in our us prison system. All of these actions on behalf of the rule-makers in our government have been made out of fear and hysteria. Please do not make the sentancing of MDMA any worse than it already is. Those who sell real MDMA and use real MDMA are not criminals. There would not be crime if there were no legislation against it's existance. Your laws are ruining people's lives. Yours, mine, and every other global citizen on this planet. Please fallow you heart and not your fears.

Thank you,

Rocky Draughon

Boulder, CO

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2/4/2001

It is my belief that Ecstasy should simply be legal. No serious health risks have been shown to exist, nor was there any link between criminal activity and Ecstasy use prior to its criminalization. Even today the only criminal activity Ecstasy users are likely to engage in is consuming Ecstasy. It is not destructive, dangerous, or harmful in any way. Criminalizing it was a foolish decision, and there is no good reason for perpetuating this mistake any further.

If this mistaken decision is not yet to be corrected, we should at least have rational sentencing laws, and equating Ecstasy with heroin is about as rational as equating BB guns with atom bombs. Heroin is a dangerous, addictive substance which destroys lives. Ecstasy is a recreational antidepressant whose users regularly report positive emotional, spiritual, and psychological transformations as a consequence of its use.

Please stop this foolishness.

Thank you,
Giles Bowkett
1458 Page St., #8
San Francisco, CA 94117

specmind

From: "Larry Seguin" <larseguin@northweb.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Saturday, February 03, 2001 6:35 PM
Subject: penalties for Ecstasy

How federal Ecstasy offenses should be punished? No punishment!!!!
I see it as an escalation of the drug war that will only fill prisons with non-violent offenders and continue at the destruction of our Constitution.

At the drug scheduling hearings (1985) on Ecstasy by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) their own Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) heard testimony from 33 witnesses and received 95 exhibits into evidence. Based on all the evidence the ALJ ruled that Ecstasy be placed in Schedule III.

In June of '99 Switzerland's supreme court ruled that there is no evidence that Ecstasy poses a serious health risk and doesn't generally lead to criminal behavior.

They said that dealing in the drug Ecstasy is not a serious crime and that Ecstasy is mostly used by 'socially integrated people'. They categorized Ecstasy as a 'soft' drug.

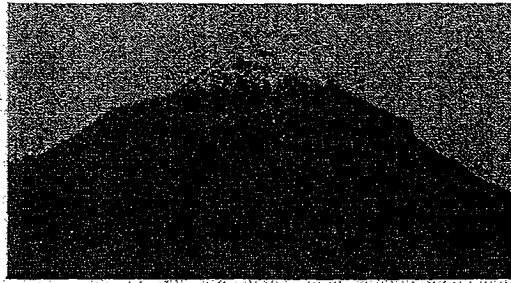
In March 2000 The Police Foundation of Britain also said Ecstasy should be treated as a soft drug. They said further that jail terms should be abolished for Ecstasy.

The Police Foundation said this after more than 2 years of study.

Respectively
Larry Seguin
288 Cold Spring Rd.
Lisbon, New York 13658-3208
315.393.7375

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2/4/2001



North Mountain Publishing

Sheldon Norberg
President/Dope Dealer ret.

U.S. Sentencing Commission

February 4, 2001

Re: *Ecstasy Sentencing Discrepancy*

Sirs,

I'm writing this from my position as a retired drug dealer, author and scholar of the drug world. The proposed alteration in sentencing that would equate the drug MDMA with heroin is not just irresponsible, it is insane. With the incredibly profitable black market already created by the government's unstudied and apparently intractable position, these sentencing alterations are unlikely to create much difference in the supply side. The demand has proven itself for some time now, and as any student of history can tell you, the increased penalties that various drug hysterias have created have done nothing to stem the use of any scheduled or non-scheduled drug.

What these penalties will do, however, is send thousands of children & young adults to prison for lengthy stays, based on the use of a drug with no addictive potential, no association to violent crime, and no conclusive evidence of cognitive disturbance.

These are your children. Believe me, I know. I sold drugs for a dozen years, MDMA included, to upper middle class white kids like yours. The conservative elements would have you believe (despite a lack of psychological evidence) that MDMA wastes the potential of young minds. There can be no doubt that extended incarceration does exactly that. Please weigh this thought, when thinking about gram penalties.

Sincerely, Sheldon Norberg

[187]

POB 225265 SF, CA 94122-5265 (415) 666-3939 fax 666-3936
books@northmountain.com www.northmountain.com/publishing.html

specmind

From: <ThirdEyeProd@aol.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Friday, February 02, 2001 11:05 AM
Subject: ecstasy law

I am writing this letter to show my disapproval for the proposed sentencing guidelines concerning ecstasy. I agree that the sale and use of ecstasy in our country has become a major problem over the past few years, but I also feel that changing the sentencing guidelines so that ecstasy falls under the same class as one of the most addictive and dangerous substances that our country is plagued with is outrageous. Personally I feel that education not increased jail time is the key to decreasing the recent public fascination with ecstasy. One site that I've found particularly useful is <http://www.dancesafe.org>.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Scott Petty
Third Eye Productions
Denver, CO

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2/4/2001

specmind

From: "gangrene jurgis" <djmoktar@hotmail.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2001 8:59 AM
Subject: mdma sentencing
To whom it may concern,

The purpose of this letter, is to feel as though I have done what I can to stop an immense injustice.

The proposed amendment to equate all forms of ecstasy with that of heroin. To do so would be to lessen the fear of such poisons as heroin. It would also overlook the proven therapeutic properties of this substance.

To compare substances which have never been proven to be addictive in any form, and which has been lauded by a wide and diverse group of people for it's many properties would be, to submit to an alarmist reaction that comes from the anti-rave community McCarthyism in the twenty first century.

MDMA and it's analogues have led to many life affirming revelations and it's blacklisting from the scientific research community would be a mistake born of mis education and media hype.

Instead of putting such laws into action, Why not stop feeding the drug wars fire, for it has not proven it's worth while ecstasy use grows exponentially and prisons swell with non violent drug offenders. create a system that will educate and council those who choose to use this chemical. Safe, tested pills would lead to safer parties, less overdoses and more cooperation with police and authorities. We can help each other make this a positive learning experience.

PLUR---

JARED C. BIANCHI

P.O. Box 251

E.corinth Vt.

05040

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Get Your Private, Free E-mail from MSN Hotmail at <http://www.hotmail.com>.

2/5/2001

specmind

From: "E&P File Server" <TimothyM@Divanet.net>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2001 5:43 PM
Attach: ATT00160.dat; resum_.dat
Subject: ecstasy sentencing
Sentencing Commision,

I have been opposed to the war on drugs since i was a child. I believe it puts non-violent drug offenders behind bars for far to long and actually a conspiracy to ensure that people of color and youth do not have the chance to educational, career and voting rights. I have been working in the field of drug addiction for six years and have yet to come across an abuser of ecstasy. I blieve that all drugs should be decriminilazied and treatment on demand should be available to anyone who desires it. I also feel that drug substitute thaerapy is an avenue that has not been explored. At bottom i think that the cange in sentencing laws around ecstasy are an effort to ensure that the powers that be continmue to make money in the recording industry and alternative forms of music are made inaccessible.

sincerely - timothy maroni

[190]

2/5/2001

specmind

From: "Lawrence Foard" <entropy@virek.vwis.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2001 8:00 AM
Subject: MDMA sentencing

I would like to state that I know a number of MDMA users, as well as a number of heroin users. None of the MDMA users have gone on to have serious problems as a result, where as all but one of the heroin users (he never moved onto injected heroin), had severe problems. Heroin resulted in addiction, loss of jobs, in cases where people turned there lives around they where generally only able to do so with treatment. I have never seen individuals exhibiting signs of long term damage from MDMA.

Some people theorize that MDMA may be toxic in humans, studies have failed to show any significant toxicity in humans. On the otherhand we know what long jail sentences do to people.

Long jail times will only remove the fairly non violent dealers from the business, leaving MDMA users to buy MDMA from the same dealers who deal in much more dangerous drugs like Cocaine, Speed and Heroin. Much like the pot crack down of the 80's helped to popularize Crack, as it drove the less violent hippy dealers out of the business.

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2/5/2001

specmind

From: "Bobby, Susan (ISFPC)" <Susan.Bobby@ispat.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2001 12:04 PM
Subject: Ecstasy - DO NOT treat as Heroin

As a voting Republican woman and a proud American citizen, I demand that this failed and ineffectual 'war on drugs' not be expanded by yet another anti-American and unworkable law. Please do not make the mistake of treating Ecstasy like Heroin. This would be like an expansion of the Vietnam War even though everyone knew the cause was lost and the war should be abandoned. The war on drugs is actually a war on the American people, and falls particularly hard and unfairly on minority groups. Historical shame would be the only result of treating Ecstasy like Heroin.

Susan Bobby
207 Elmhurst ST.
Valparaiso, IN 46385
219-531-2810
219-399-4137

[192]

2/4/2001

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing the U.S. Sentencing Commission in regards to the proposed increase in penalties for ecstasy possession and trafficking. I will respond to each of the Commission's points in order. The official notice states that ecstasy is similar in its hallucinogenic effects to mescaline. This is not accurate. Mescaline is a much more visual drug and cause many and much more intense visual hallucinations than ecstasy. When on ecstasy, the user's vision is only greatly stimulated and any hallucinations are very mild. Ecstasy does act as a stimulant and is neither physically or psychologically addictive. It is not prudent to categorize ecstasy as similar to mescaline in regards to relative harm and sentencing. Should the Commission alternatively treat Ecstasy comparably to some other major drugs of abuse such as cocaine, methamphetamines or heroin? No. The commission should not increase penalties for ecstasy to the levels of these other drugs. Not enough is known about ecstasy to warrant the penalties akin to cocaine, meth or heroin. It has not been shown that ecstasy has the severe addictive or abusive properties of these drugs. The harm of ecstasy is not known and sentencing for ecstasy ought to reflect the relative harm possible to all parties from ecstasy use. To group ecstasy with these other drugs is harmful, misguided and wrong. Furthermore, to increase exponentially the penalties for larger amounts of ecstasy would not deter people from trafficking the drug. It can only help to make the drug trade more lucrative and profitable, as the increased consequences for trafficking will only serve to drive up street prices. Severe sentencing for other drugs has not been effective in deterring drug use among youths nor overall. It is only harmful to increase the penalties for ecstasy as more people will fill our jails at tremendous cost to society while people will continue to use drugs regardless of penalties. This fact has been shown repeatedly throughout the history of prohibition of alcohol and our current, and failing, war on drugs. Please consider these comments seriously before you act. I speak for many Americans who feel this way.

Respectfully,
Justin Reid

[193]

specmind

From: "Eric Heitzman" <Eric_Heitzman@hmc.edu>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2001 4:53 AM
Subject: To be forwarded to the Sentencing Commission
 To the Sentencing Commission,

I know you are going to get a lot of these letters, so I will be brief.

Here is what is in this letter:

1. Who am I?
2. What do I recommend?
3. Conclusion

1. Who am I?

I am a 21 year old university student from California. I have many close friends and acquaintances who use ecstasy, and because I am a nerd, I have gone out of my way to read all of the available material on the drug. I have read everything that is collectively posted on NIDA, DanceSafe, Erowid (which is a lot), MAPS, and the DEA's sites. Most of this material is comprised of descriptions of how the MDMA works, studies on the effects of MDMA (including possible neurotoxicity, long term, and short term effects), usage statistics, injury statistics, etc. I consider myself to be extremely knowledgeable with regards to MDMA, but I do not have any formal pharmacological training in this area.

Additionally, I have some level of understanding of the drug's effects on our culture. I have personal experience with friends and relatives who use the drug, and have spent a considerable amount of time reading the media's interpretations of "the latest drug craze," which I feel is predominantly hype.

My writings are meant to provide an additional perspective from the other writings you will probably receive. Most of the people who write to you will probably be distinguished lawmakers, policymakers, doctors (or other medically trained professionals), or members of the pro-ecstasy community (such as DanceSafe, MAPS, Alchemid, etc). You will probably also get letters from users of the drug - people who are well intentioned, though quite possibly under-informed about the drug's ill effects. I am unique, in that I am not affiliated with the government or any organization, and that I am also extremely informed about legal, medical, safety, and cultural issues surrounding MDMA.

2. What do I recommend? (and why?)

Based on experience and prior readings, I can say the following things about ecstasy use:

- a) "It has been represented to the Commission that Ecstasy (i.e., MDMA, MDEA, MDA and PMA) is similar in its hallucinogenic effect on the user to mescaline." Ecstasy is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a

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2/5/2001

hallucinogen. People under the influence of ecstasy do not see things. They are not prone to visual hallucinations any more than, say, someone who is under the influence of alcohol is prone to visual hallucinations (which is not very much, obviously). You probably know this already, but briefly: Ecstasy is an empathogen, meaning that users feel more friendly and positive (empathic) about the people around them, and is also an entactogen, meaning that tactile stimulation is heightened. Neither of these effects are dangerous to the user, or to the people around the user, in the same way that visual hallucinations are. No one on ecstasy would ever jump off of a building or in front of a car in the manner in which people who have taken hallucinogens are prone to doing.

b) "[This class of drugs] has been described as having an added stimulant component that can elevate heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature." Although MDMA is chemically similar to methamphetamine, it is a different drug. Only true stimulants, such as amphetamines and methamphetamines, would increase heart rate and blood pressure. Pills sold as "ecstasy" would only elevate heart rate and blood pressure if they were cut with one of these stimulants. On it's own, pure MDMA does neither of these things. It is true, however, that MDMA causes an increase in body temperature. This change is fundamentally different (neurologically speaking) from the effects of stimulants. Body temperature is increased because the serotonin system controls body temperature (among other things), and that is the system that MDMA affects primarily. Note that this effect is greatly exaggerated in media reports - body temperature is not increased substantially unless someone is grossly abusing the drug. To summarize: ecstasy is not a stimulant, but it does elevate body temperature (but not by much).

c) "It has also been suggested that the drug is neither physically nor psychologically addictive." Heroin is addictive. Why would the Sentencing Commission equate (in sentencing terms) a physically and psychologically addictive drug, such as heroin, with a drug which is not addictive?

My recommendation is that Ecstasy be rescheduled in the most lenient manner possible. It is well known that ecstasy is far less dangerous and addictive than heroin, so the suggestion that ecstasy be given the same 1kg marijuana equivalency that is afforded to heroin seems ludicrous. I have already discussed (and attempted to dismiss) the notion that ecstasy has visual hallucinations similar to those caused by mescaline, so one might think that ecstasy should not even be scheduled as heavily as mescaline is scheduled. However, ecstasy does elevate body temperature when consumed in great volume (an abuse quantity). I can not impress upon the commission enough how greatly this effect has been exaggerated by the popular media in the last year. However, I realize that the commission is responsible to that same media, and ultimately to the American public. For this reason, I concede that MDMA (and the other drugs mentioned) should be scheduled as strictly as mescaline is currently scheduled. This is, to my understanding, the most lenient of the positions currently being examined by the commission.

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3. Conclusion

Medically, it has not yet been determined that ecstasy is as dangerous as the media has portrayed it over the course of the last year. The lack of research in this field, combined with the sensationalist tactics of the modern media has served to provide us (the people), and you (the lawmakers) with little to no information of any quality or accuracy. I sincerely hope that in the course of your deliberations, you have the time to consider the sources of your information. The DEA and NIDA funded have managed to generated an astounding amount of misinformation on the subject of MDMA (which is truly remarkable considering they haven't been doing any legitimate research on it).

In addition to my suggestion that there is a lack of scientific and medical information to go on, I would like to make a more personal plea. The MDMA users I know are a very responsible crowd. I know it must sound ridiculous to think of drug users as responsible, but I genuinely feel that in this particular case, that sentiment is correct. As a drug, MDMA is frequently consumed at close personal gatherings, usually by close friends, usually with sober people around, usually in a safe environment, and usually in moderation. These kids are breaking the law every time they do this, and they know it. They feel guilty about breaking the law, but feel that it is the law that is in the wrong, and that the medical evidence supports their decision to use responsibly. Stricter drug laws only serve to further criminalize the people who choose to use these drugs in safe, responsible settings.

Heroin is a hard drug. A hard, scary, dark drug. There is no responsible way to use heroin, both because of its outrageous addiction potential and because of its incredibly capacity for destroying the human body. None of these sentiments can be used to describe ecstasy, which as a drug, is a soft drug which can be used responsibly and in moderation (or at least this is more true for ecstasy than it is for heroin!).

I'm opposed to changing the punishment for ecstasy possession at all. But since you must change it, change it by as little as you can get away with. If you can, allow for a 'personal use' amount, or define a tiered sentencing schedule so that individual kids don't have their lives ruined by a heroin-sized felony conviction rather than a minor conviction like possession marijuana.

Alright, that's the end of the official letter I composed hours before the official deadline. I'm not really happy with it overall. I sincerely wish I could provide the Commission with a more clear understanding of how the drug works, what it does, who uses it, and how it's used. I'm afraid that important decisions are being made with less than a complete presentation of all the needed information (both because the information is hard to come by, and because it's difficult for people who know this sort of information and are unbiased to come and present). I would absolutely love to aid the Commission in understanding these complicated issues, but I'm afraid that a

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2/5/2001

one-way e-mail isn't really a sufficient method for accomplishing that.
Please contact me if you think I could be of any use to you whatsoever, my
time just isn't all that valuable.

Thank you,

Eric Heitzman
Eric_Heitzman@hmc.edu
(909) 607-1442

[197]

2/5/2001

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to express my concern over the possibility of ecstasy being considered comparable to heroin under the Sentencing Commission's proposed amendment. I am no expert on pharmacology or the legalities of ecstasy and other drugs, but I hope that I may be able to provide a perspective of the people who may be affected by the new policies. I think anyone who knows anything of the effects of ecstasy know that it is unlike the effects of any other drug. I would ask the committee to take into account the effects, both long and short term, of ecstasy use. While I cannot say that I am an avid ecstasy user, I am acquainted with several people who have had considerable experience with the drug. To point out the immediately obvious differences between ecstasy and heroin, ecstasy is not physically addictive and for most people is not psychologically addictive. Heroin is immediately addictive, so that many people develop a severe addiction after their first time trying the drug. They become so dependant and obsessed, that acquisition of heroin becomes their only concern, destroying the life they had before and causing great pain to all those around them who must see their downfall. Heroin destroys families, friendships, and lives. I do not believe ecstasy should be placed in the same class as any other drug. While ecstasy may have some mild hallucinogenic effects, the effects are nowhere near that of LSD, mescaline, or other such substances. The stimulant effects are considerably milder than cocaine and amphetamines, and the feelings similar to those caused by narcotics are considerably weaker and much less addictive. Ecstasy users do not become physically addicted to the drug, and in my experience only those people who have a tendency to take everything to the extreme become psychologically addicted. Its use, which almost always remains occasional if not very rare, does not have the devastating effect on the life of the user and those around him that other more addictive drugs tend to have. While in very extreme cases there may be health problems associated with ecstasy use, vomiting overheating, and other problems usually associated with the environment in which it is used, it does not consume the life of the user so that they focus on the drug and neglect their health. The number of incidents where a user is hospitalized is relatively low. The patterns of ecstasy use among high school students seem to be more similar to the patterns of alcohol and marijuana use than to cocaine or heroin. Users may occasionally take the drug on weekends, not usually in large quantities, and are not prone to loss of ambition or self-control. While students are aware that ecstasy is far from "harmless," they are also aware of the difference between the effects of occasional ecstasy use and the devastating effects of the many far more dangerous and addictive drugs that are available.

I think assigning penalties comparable to or the same as those of heroin will lead to long prison terms to individuals who are relatively harmless. I have heard of relatively little violence associated with the sale or use of ecstasy. Congress has been affected by the politics of the media circus associated with the "new drug sweeping the nation," and I'm sure it would look horrible to oppose stiffer penalties for the drug when it came time for re-election. However considering the realities of the drug, that it is not addictive and does not lead to violence, I think the only way it could devastate a life is if someone was sent to prison for a long period of time. I do however believe that other drugs sold as ecstasy, such as MDA, DXM, PMA, etc. should carry the same penalties. These designer drugs are often manufactured and sold as ecstasy because those involved know that many of them carry less severe penalties. However many of these are far more dangerous than ecstasy, especially PMA, and therefore should carry penalties that are at least as stiff.

In conclusion, I would ask that although it is important to discourage illegal drug use, it is also important when establishing appropriate punishments to consider both the effect the drug has on society and the lives of the user, as well as the potentially devastating effects on the lives of very few people who will actually be caught. As unfortunate as it may be, I can honestly say that the average user/small distributor will most likely not be discouraged by stiffer penalties, however if caught the effects on life and personality of the individual might be more devastating. I think overly stiff penalties would not be nearly as helpful to either the general population or the ecstasy-using population as efforts to educate the public of the risks and harms of ecstasy use would be. Long prison terms will not have a major effect on the greater problem, but would only serve to destroy the lives of a few very unlucky individuals.

Michael Doyle
mtdoo7@aol.com

To the Sentencing Commission:

I am responding as a concerned citizen to the proposed amendment to the Sentencing Guidelines regarding "Ecstasy."

According to your official notice, the proposed amendment will treat Ecstasy as being of comparable seriousness to heroin. I believe this to be unduly harsh, for the following reasons:

1. As you note in your official bulletin, Ecstasy is neither psychologically nor physically addictive. Heroin is extremely addictive. Other possibilities listed in the official bulletin include equivalencies to cocaine or methamphetamine, both of which are extremely addictive. Ecstasy, again, is not.
2. Though Ecstasy is not currently sanctioned for this purpose in the United States, significant numbers of mental health professionals have questioned Ecstasy's placement on Schedule I, arguing that Ecstasy has great therapeutic value. Demonizing the drug as "equivalent to heroin" belittles the professional opinions of said therapists, and makes public debate about the drug's medicinal value even more difficult than it already is.
3. When given the opportunity in recent years, American voters have strongly favored new approaches to the drug war (consider the recent successes of ballot initiatives like California's Proposition 36 and the medicinal marijuana initiatives that have passed in many states). Dramatically increasing the federal penalties for Ecstasy may have the support of Congresspeople afraid to appear "soft on crime," but it is increasingly doubtful whether the voting public offers similar support.
4. The War on Drugs is an unequivocal failure, costing the United States billions of dollars with the primary effect of putting millions of our citizens into prison, while having almost zero success stopping the flow of illegal narcotics into our country. It is time to base decisions not on fear-mongering rhetoric but on rational thought processes. Equating Ecstasy to heroin is fear-mongering, plain and simple.

Considering the above points, Ecstasy should not be considered comparable to any of the seriously addictive substances considered in the official bulletin. If the penalties are to be increased, comparison to mescaline makes the most rational sense. However, I urge the Sentencing Commission to consider making any increase in penalties as small as possible. Now is the time to start to end the great damage caused to our nation not by the drugs themselves but by the drug war.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Lanin
Los Angeles, CA

MDMA and Society

It is said that the increase in popularity of the MDMA, also known as ecstasy, is greater than any other drug in history. In the space of just 10 years, it has gone from being virtually unknown to being one of easiest illegal substances to obtain. This incredible growth rate is largely due to the nature of ecstasy; It provides the user with an unique and pleasurable state of consciousness, with few negative side-effects.

MDMA is a very unique drug. Discovered long ago in 1914, it has only recently generated new interest, primarily being adopted by youth interested in electronic music. Due its empathic, energizing and mood stimulating effects it most often used in social settings, especially those involving dancing. It makes the user incredibly happy, with increased sensations of touch, and feelings of contentment. These effects are primarily caused due to MDMA's effect of increasing amounts of the neurotransmitter serotonin in the brain. While MDMA does have mildly hallucinogenic properties, its primary effects are empathogenic. The drug makes the user emotionally much more open, and socially outgoing. As anyone who has tried it will tell you, in many ways it feels just like falling in love. Along with all these positive effects, there are a few undesired physiological side-effects. It is known to increase the heart-rate, place some strain on the liver, and increase the risk of dehydration.

While MDMA is definitely a serious drug that must be regulated in some manner, increasing the penalties for its possession and manufacture are not the answer. The proposed legislation will treat the offense of the possession of MDMA on par with heroin, despite it has barely anything in common with it aside from it being a chemical which acts on the mind. Heroin is an incredibly addictive, dangerous drug that is rarely used recreationally. Heroin users become so physiologically addicted to the drug that they almost always increase usage, and ruin their lives. Ecstasy users do not behave in this manner. Since MDMA is not physically and only mildly psychologically addictive, most users will use the drug only once or twice a month, and almost always at parties or clubs. The fact it has gained such great popularity is not from a small number of people who use large quantities of the drug, but from a very large number of light. While you do hear stories of many users taking multiple pills per night, almost every weekend, this is the exception. Due to tolerance effects such usage rarely persists and users drastically reduce their consumption of MDMA after such a high-use period. The much more common scenario is the 18-25 year old middle-class youth, who occasionally uses MDMA to enhance a party experience.

MDMA use has now spread to such a wide segment of the population that the government should seriously reconsider how its users and suppliers should be treated. Increasing the penalties will unlikely decrease the consumption of MDMA for several reasons:

1. It is in high demand, by individuals in all segments of american society.
2. It is easily smuggled, due to its compact size and low average per person quantities
3. It can be synthesized with only basic knowledge of chemistry and proper instructions

Over the next few years we will likely see that the demographic profile of MDMA users become even more varied. You will be as likely to find a young business executive consuming it on a recreational basis as a disillusioned 14 year old boy. This is already happening, and will become even more common. MDMA offers the user a feeling that is universally desired. It does not just offer the user a high, it offers the user an experience, something they will never forget. From personal and second-hand accounts, I can say this experience is so powerful and so revered, that I highly doubt anything short of capital punishment for its distribution will stop people from catering to this demand. I estimate that soon it will likely appeal to and occasionally be taken by any individual who feels comfortable taking a drug to alter their consciousness. With this increase in usage, so will demand for MDMA, even if the penalties for production and distribution are raised.

I believe that instead of increasing the penalties for usage of MDMA, attention should be focused on its safety. Since its effects are so desirable usage will continue even though it has mild neurotoxic effects. For many people, this small amount of possible long-term damage is worth the experience it offers. I doubt that is mind-set will change, so it is likely that many people are going to suffer some neurological damage due to MDMA usage in the next few years. If the government is primarily interested in protecting the public, and not instituting unrealistic prohibitionist schemes, it is imperative that their attention be focused on harm reduction instead of increased incarceration. Studies show that if MDMA is conjunction with strong anti-oxidants and anti-depressant medications know as Selective-Serotonin-Reuptake-Inhibitors (SSRI's) its neurotoxic effects can be eliminated. I feel that the extra money that would be spent imprisoning users and distributors of ecstasy, who are for the most part productive and responsible members of society, should instead be spent on investigating such methods of possible harm reduction.

[200]

Mother nature has genetically programmed us to be hedonists, and instituting stronger punishments will not change this aspect of human nature. The consumption of MDMA is simply the latest and most effective method of chemically-inducing happiness. Putting more people in jail for the "pursuit of happiness" is not the answer. Making sure that people are safe in their attempt is.

Written by a 22 yr old University Student

[201]

Dear Sir/Mme,

I write you regarding your review of sentencing guidelines of the drug MDMA. I hold no credentials in the field of pharmacology or drug/use abuse so my message may mean little to you. I write anyway, in hope that a preponderance of those who share my view have also written, thereby making a louder if not a more expert, plea.

A few words about my background for context: I am a 39 year old white male, CEO of a company which I began in 1982. We are a growing company, based in Bloomington, Indiana. We employ slightly more than 200 people in six restaurants, which we operate there. By most any measure, our businesses could be considered quite successful, even to the extent that my partner and I were named Bloomington's "Small Business People of the Year", by our Chamber of commerce, last year. I am a productive member of my community and our nation. I am also an occasional of MDMA and other psychedelic drugs and have been since age 16.

The legality or sentencing severity of these drugs has never had an impact on my choice of their use. I am certain that legal penalties will have no effect on my choices in the future. I have experienced previously unexplored realms of my own consciousness through them. They have sparked my creativity and heightened my appreciation of life. Yet I have never felt the tug of addiction from these substances. (A tug that I understand intimately through my long-standing addiction to tobacco.) Sometimes years will pass between uses.

I was recently told about the adolescent son of friend who was arrested with 20 MDMA tablets and was facing a significant jail sentence. It brought tears to my eyes, and is likely the reason for my writing to you at this late hour.

As you determine this policy, please remember the children, your children, and our friends' children. These drugs are powerful medicine. They will not go away by putting our children away.

Sincerely yours,

Jeff Mease
CEO
One World Enterprises
PO Box 6955
Bloomington, Indiana 47407-6955

812-339-2256

specmind

From: "Geoff Cole" <g_bonic@hotmail.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2001 7:31 PM
Subject: Ecstasy

Dear U.S. Sentencing Commission,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the dancesafe newsletter sent about regarding increased punishment for the sale or use of Ecstasy. Ecstasy can not even be compared to heroin. Heroin is a very dangerous drug that often kills users due to overdosing. People do not die from Ecstasy. The Ecstasy related deaths were caused by other dangerous drugs that were said to be Ecstasy. PMA is one of the drugs responsible for deaths of at least 6 in the U.S. However, PMA is not Ecstasy at all, and should not be put into the same class as Ecstasy. PMA is a powerful hallucinogen, that can cause the body to dehydrate extremely fast. Ecstasy is not a hallucinogen. Ecstasy is a relatively safe drug, and should not be classified with other dangerous drugs. Please consider the number of innocent young adults who will be sent to jail for using a drug that is maybe safer than alcohol. Making a more severe law won't stop people from using and selling Ecstasy, it will just put more people into the already overcrowded prison system. Stop wasting resources on the war against Ecstasy, and use them to fight crime or help education. America has so many problems, and Ecstasy is the least of them. Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,
G

Get your FREE download of MSN Explorer at <http://explorer.msn.com>

[203]

2/5/2001

Re: Ecstasy as a Schedule I drug?

To whom it may concern

I am a 67 year old retiree who has never tried illegal drugs.

But I am a student of history, and am alarmed at how little we learned from our attempt to achieve an alcohol-free America in the 1920s. The lesson, then as now, is that no popular drug is so dangerous that it will not become worse by driving it underground, and the harder it is driven the worse it becomes.

In contrast to our alarm over this drug we see that Switzerland is treating Ecstasy as a soft drug. It is safer there because it is labeled and not adulterated - with PMA, for instance - and the kids know how to be careful.

To make Ecstasy a schedule I drug, with heroin, would compound the mistake we made when we put cannabis on schedule I. It would further discredit the criminal justice system in the eyes of young people.

For your reference, I have appended a news article about the Swiss from the Guardian, published in mid 1999 as follows . . .

Pubdate: Fri, 18 June 1999
Source: Guardian, The (UK)
Copyright: Guardian Media Group 1999
Contact: letters@guardian.co.uk
Website: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/>
Author: Jon Henley, in Paris

SWISS GO SOFT ON ECSTASY

Switzerland's highest court has flown in the face of European drug legislation and the latest US scientific evidence by ruling that ecstasy poses no big health problems and that small-scale dealing in the drug should not be a serious crime.

Effectively classifying ecstasy as a "soft" drug like cannabis, the Swiss federal tribunal overturned a one-year jail term handed to a man

convicted of selling 1,000 tablets of the drug. It confirmed a nine-month sentence given to another man for selling 1,350 tablets by a court that considered the case was not a "serious" offence.

The tribunal said that while ecstasy was in no way harmless, medical evidence showed it was less dangerous than cocaine and heroin, largely because it was not addictive.

specmind

From: "Owl Shadow" <owlshadow@urchin.net>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2001 9:17 AM
Subject: MDMA scheduling

To whom it may concern,

I am very opposed to the re-scheduling of MDMA at this time. I think that the drugs' track record in terms of harm does not warrant this action. Further, it's potential use in medicine should be considered. We are condemning a substance that has not had a fair trial in the scientific community, and may be of great potential value to the community. There are numerous examples to be found of people benefiting from MDMA use in both medical and non-medical situations. Further, there is little to no evidence that shows that the drug should be treated as harmful enough to call for a stricter scheduling. I am for loosening the laws that prevent the use of MDMA, not tightening them.

Thank you,
S. M.

[206]

2/5/2001

Henry Schwan
PO Box 170711
San Francisco, CA, 94117
+1 415 626 8167 voice
owlswan@yahoo.com

Comments for the Sentencing Commission
on Ecstasy emergency re-sentencing

2 February 2001

Executive Summary: Mind altering substances have been used in human society for untold thousands of years apparently with many beneficial effects. This is still true up to the present day although the collective governments of the world have chosen to allow some substances to be considered "legal" while the vast majority have been declared illegal". While these choices have not been arbitrary, they have seemingly been illogical since the damage done by some of the "legal" substances far exceeds the damage done by all the "illegal" consciousness altering substances. Ecstasy is one of these consciousness altering substances and there is no logical reason to increase its penalty. There is even less good reason to increase the penalty as an emergency measure, thereby preventing a much larger segment of the society from having input into this very serious decision.

1. Mind altering substances have been for untold thousands of years and are still used in human society, apparently with many beneficial effects.

There is a large body of research on the ritual use of sacred substances in numerous pre and post pastoral/industrial cultures. Some of these include the shamanic use by Native Americans of both the peyote cactus (lophophora williamsii) and the mushrooms of the genus psilocybe. This

ritual use continues legally today with peyote use by the Native American Church. There are many South American plants which have an ancient tradition and continue to be in use in the present. Two of these substances are Ayahuasca/Yage (*Banisteriopsis caapi*) and iboga/Ebok (Tabernanthe iboga), which are used to see sickness and help in healing among other things

See: <<http://diseyes.lycaeum.org/dmt/dmt.htm>>

There is also and has been the use of a natural DMT containing snuff in the coming of age ceremony of certain African tribes and the continuing use of the West African cola nut which contains one of the legal mind altering substances - caffeine - and is still used today in Coca-Cola. The beneficial use of ecstasy continues to be part of this tradition. Many people who are otherwise anti-social, experience powerful psychic healing after experiencing the effects of ecstasy. While this may seem to be anecdotal, this does not make the experience less real, and what other type of knowledge can we get with research in official channels all but entirely prohibited. 2. The collective governments of the world have chosen to allow some substances to be considered "legal" while the vast majority have been declared "illegal". While these choices have not been arbitrary, they have seemingly been illogical since the damage done by some of the "legal" substances far exceeds the damage done by all the "illegal" consciousness altering substances.

Alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, and theobromine are all mind altering substances which are not only tolerated, but promoted by governments around the world. While there are prohibitionists who would probably make even some of these illegal in the US, alcohol is already illegal in

many
Islamic countries. The difference in the categories in the United States seems to have been drawn in order to prohibit those substances which encourage introspection and whose use brings into question the categorization of these substances by those who prohibit them. Independent thinking seems to be the principal target. I don't think that alcohol or tobacco should be made illegal, but the collective damage their use has done to overall lifespan dwarfs any problems caused by all the illegal substances put together. "Excessive alcohol consumption leads to more than 100,000 deaths annually in the US" (From: Scientific American, December 1996). This is in opposition to: "There were 16,926 Deaths From Drug-Induced Causes in 1998 (legal and illegal drugs)" (1998) Source: National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 48, No. 11.

See: <<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/druguse.htm>>

Note that this includes both illegal and legal drugs, leaving the deaths from all illegal drugs far less and the problems with ecstasy minute. The weight of the governments own statistics strongly militates against increasing the penalties for ecstasy and indeed speaks loudly for ceasing the drug war in its entirety, releasing all of its non-violent incarcerated, returning to them their civil rights and turning whatever problems remain over to the public health sector with incarceration saved for more traditional crimes like violence, robbery and tax evasion.

3. Ecstasy is a relatively benign substance and there is no logical reason to increase its penalty. There is even less good reason to increase the penalty as an emergency measure, thereby preventing a much larger segment of society from having input into this very serious decision.

There seems to be some some sort of mass hysteria surrounding the current use of ecstasy, however this is not a grassroots hysteria, but a hysteria of the opinion makers of this country. This is necessarily much more dangerous as the effects of this sort of hysteria can negatively affect exponentially larger numbers of people. Even if the argument isn't that ecstasy is inherently dangerous, but that that this proposed sentence increase is to stop younger people from using it, the argument is still illogical on its face. Incarcerating young people for using ecstasy will do immensely more harm to them than responsible use of ecstasy ever could. This is all compounded by the fact that this is an emergency action. Why is this an emergency? Are people dying en masse in the streets? Raising sentences, filling prisons, and thereby destroying peoples lives and destroying families is such a serious undertaking that it should be looked at in the cold light of day with as many people as possible talking about it. Emergency proceedings are often a way to sneak in laws so that when people hear of them they are much harder to roll back.

Request for action

With respect to my comments above I am asking you:

1. To rescind this call for emergency action so that cooler heads might prevail in the end;
2. To not only refuse to raise the sentences for ecstasy but to lower the penalties or remove them altogether;
3. To join in the call for a national forum on how to end the war on drugs, which in reality is really a war on the American people and

other
peoples of the world.

Henry Schwan is currently a webmaster and sometimes general contractor and a generalist with broad knowledge in many seemingly unrelated fields.

Formerly a First Lieutenant in the Army Infantry, he served honorably in

Vietnam. He has also been in the forefront of the organic food movement

having realized 29 years ago that putting unnecessary poison in the human

body does not make sense. Beyond that he also served 6 years 4 months in

federal prison for conspiracy to sell LSD. Having personally ingested and

having been around thousands of people who have ingested many mind altering substances he is an (unrecognised) expert on effects these substances have on the individual and on the human condition in general.

specmind

From: "nvrau" <nvrau@yahoo.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Saturday, February 03, 2001 11:26 PM
Subject: Sentencing Issue

This message is in regards to the new study involving the sentencing of MDMA and setting it equal to Heroin.

I am contacting your commission in an attempt to express my sincere disappointment in the direction the United States is heading with it's "Drug War" policies. We are spending too much time and money on the wrong end of the problem. Quit spending so much time and money on stopping the drug flow and start spending more time and money on the treatment of abuse and addiction or narcotics. You kill the demand and you kill the supply! If you kill the supply, you still have the demand and as long as there is a demand there will be a supply. Only now the demand raises the stakes and now it costs more, which brings me to the next point.

Increasing the sentences is not going to stop or help the "Drug War". It will however increase the price while increasing the number of dangerous drugs on the streets. When you increase the sentencing of one drug or eliminate its ability to be found knock offs pop up. Some of those knock offs result in the deaths and dangers of drug use. Increase the sentencing will also continue the deadly practice of turning dealers into pushers! If it costs more to buy, it will cost more to sell. This mean some customers will be lost and new customers will have to be found. There is a BIG difference between a dealer and a pusher. A dealer is available to those who want it, a pusher goes out and tries to fine new customers to get addicted by giving their product away. Cutting off supply creates pushers!

This brings me back to the abuse and addiction. Our government needs to help those who fuel the demand and cause problems, that's the users. We need to make treatment readily available to all, from big cities to small towns.

PLEASE; reconsider this proposal to raise sentencing. Lets start helping the needy instead of fighting this losing battle.

Earth First,

=====

B.

[212]

2/4/2001

specmind

From: "Paul Lindquist" <quindlist@mindspring.com>

To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>

Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2001 4:40 AM

Subject: E

I am a mother of a college kid who has taken ecstasy. I applaud any kind of control that the government can legally take to stop the proliferation of these drugs. My son was depressed, lost appetite and sleep, had small muscle tremors. How can this be good? It must be controlled. Thank you.

The Georgia Lindquists

Reply to: Quindlist@mindspring.com

[213]

2/4/2001

specmind

From: "John P. Arnone" <JUANVAN@hism.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2001 12:55 PM
Subject: Ecstasy changes

If this were to change in the sentencing of users caught in sell, or holding E. They would be facing many years for one pill. Considering that one pill is about 100 mg. I do not believe that my government has the right to tell me what I have the right to put into my body. I have used E for 2 years on a Recreational usage, 2-3 pills every 2 months. I know that all people are like this, but if it is not used in moderation then harmful things will happen. Anything used in abusive terms is not healthy. Since E uses Seritron to generate this feeling, more uses would see less of this drug in your body. I have also gotten pill for other adults, but in this if the person is under the age of 18 I will not get it for them. They are not in my eyes old enough to do this, the brain has not finished developing to some what of a mature age. I have had many children yell and scream at me for this, but I don't wish to see little children getting hurt with something that don't know anything about. Before the first time I had done E I had done 2 months of research on the drug, I have more knowledge about all drugs than the Drug police task force in my area, I had talked to 3 of the Police officers that belong to this organization, and they don't have a clue about what any of the drugs do to you aka LSD, K, Ecstasy. They have knowledge about Cocaine, and Heroin but not as much as I do. I think that it is SAD I know more being 20 years old, than most older people who are to uphold the laws of this country. This "NO" does not work, DARE does not work. I was not educated as to what drugs will do to me. I was "told" no. That is why I believe that the government is wrong in doing what they have done to drugs. I have many people that have backed me up on this. I hope that some day DARE will educate the children, perhaps. I will write more, but I wish to make the cut off time. Thank you for listening.

John P. Arnone

[214]

2/5/2001

I am writing this to correct the misleading information that appears in the amendment, I am including sources for all my information.

1. MDMA does not have a hallucinogenic effect, and definitely not similar to mescaline.
(Lycaeum organization, Dance safe organization, the vaults of Erowid)

This misconception may come from the marketing of 2c-b as MDMA or extasy.
(Lycaeum organization information on 2C-B)

2.It can elevate blood pressure and body temperature, and as with any substance (or enjoyable situation) can be psychologically addictive.

What should be noted is how many people die or are hospitalized from associated use of MDMA. When compared with the number of people that die or are hospitalized after consuming an imitation of MDMA. (DXM, PMA, 2C-B, or any other substance that has been sold as MDMA)

This should also be compared with the number of emergency room visits from adverse reactions to legal or prescription drugs. When compared objectively it is less harmful and less addictive than many other drugs. This is the reason the drug is so popular, another media misrepresentation is that these drugs are confined to the club/rave scene.

A personal suggestion would be to raise the sentence for the drugs that are the most damaging.
(responsible for the most deaths and emergency room visits)

specmind

From: "Eric F" <ericf@jump.net>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2001 5:58 AM
Subject: Attn: Sentencing Commission -- RE: MDMA sentencing

It is not necessary to increase the sentence of ecstasy to the same as heroin. First of all, heroin is a physically addictive drug that ruins thousands of lives each year. Ecstasy is a drug that has effects that can be attained through natural means, quite easily and effectively I might add. A true case of love or yearning for another person that you significantly care for can sufficiently describe the same effects that occur during an ecstasy high. This is based off of neurological evidence in the brain and the amount of serotonin released into the synapse of your brain's neurons. To sum it all up, ecstasy does not pose as great a threat to the American public that heroin does and should not be held in the same light.

* Ecstasy in this paragraph should be noted as the chemical compound known as MDMA or MDA, not the (more dangerous) forms that can be found on the streets such as DXM, PCP, Ketamine, or, the worst, PMA.

[216]

2/5/2001

specmind

From: "Freese" <freese@antisocial.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2001 4:07 PM
Subject: Ectasy Sentencing

I would just like to voice my disagreement to this proposed bill.

Free email with personality! Over 200 domains!
<http://www.MyOwnEmail.com>

[217]

2/4/2001

specmind

From: <Raveaholic101@cs.com>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Saturday, February 03, 2001 3:36 AM
Subject: Ecstasy sentencing alert

MDMA should not be treated as though it was heroine. MDMA in the past has shown to be very useful in marriage and other types of counseling. A time to reflect... I have seen enough 48 Hours television show to know that there are positive uses for the drug. Not excessive use though...

Thank you for your time

Sincerely,
Heather

[218]

2/4/2001

specmind

From: "Maroni, Joan" <maronj@cws.state.ca.us>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Cc: <j_maroni@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2001 11:46 AM
Subject: ecstasy

Please do not compare ecstasy to heroin....it is not comparable and I am opposed to any legislation to prosecute people using this or any othersubstance. I am opposed to illegal drug use and alchol use...so if we ban one then let's ban them all!

Why not legislate banning alcohol at sporting events...there is much more damage caused by alcohol at those events AND people killed compared to ecstasy use....THINK ABOUT IT!!!

[219]

2/5/2001

specmind

From: <LeiaOrgana@aol.com>
<rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2001 10:54 AM
Subject: please read, my opinion-thank you

Hi, I am a girl in high school and i wanted to tell you guys a thing or two about kids. **Think this over again.** I know ecstasy is a drug, i know that it is against the law, but the **higher the risk the more it is gonna cause problems.** If you make it so high that it is up there with heroin people are going to find it more of a challenge. There will be bigger problems and **more people** will go to jail that **need help**, NOT jail time. Ecstasy is not as damaging as heroin nor as addictive. **Heroin kills people MDMA doesn't.** I think in my opinion that all drugs should be regulated..and it's current status that it is eqal to LSD is high enough. Do you really want to punish all of america for having problems? for wanting to find a way out?? No kid knows where to look and you people aren't helping. **Support kids try and help them!!!!** Provide them with information, with better things to do, and they'll choose health. I did!! Not everyone is completely perfect, you need to help america's youth, provide support for places like DANCESAFE.org who try to educate NOT throw people's lives away. Did you ever try weed? I bet you or one of your friends did, what would of happened if they or you'd been put in jail for it? It the same thing. I bet by now they've stopped..they live a healthy life..**HELP PEOPLE DON'T HURT THEM!!** You are causing more problems than you are helping with this. I know your intent is for the better of america, but you aren't getting all the facts. You are biased.. **HELP DON'T HURT!!** Please!! People out there need a friendly face and help! Not jail and the ruin of their lives!! Please think it over. People turn around, people change, just help, don't hurt..thank you.

alex

[220]

2/4/2001

specmind

From: "Robby Rob" <fn128@bellsouth.net>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Saturday, February 03, 2001 2:23 AM
Subject: Ecstasy Sentencing

To

Comparing ecstasy to heroin and crack. Come on guys what did all those years at Harvard and Yale do for you. Just the scientific evidence that is out there shows that there are no comparison in the both. Increasing the sentence is not going to stop the use of ecstasy I believe the proof in that is asking your self have you stopped the use of heroin and crack now? It has come to our attention (generation X) that you guys just keep coming up with more and more scare tactics and it is pretty annoying. Please educate your self on this drug MDMA, before making your decisions remember knowledge is power and power will give your our hears..

Robbyrob

[221]

2/4/2001