



SADD Press Release:

Recent Analysis Shows that One in Six High School Seniors Admitted Driving While High

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Drug Czar, Secretary of Transportation, and Safe Driving Leaders Launch New Campaign to Urge Teens to 'Steer Clear of Pot'

(Washington, D.C.) – Approximately one in six high school seniors in the United States admitted driving under the influence of marijuana, according to a recent analysis of Monitoring the Future data, and 41 percent of teens surveyed by SADD/Liberty Mutual said they were not concerned about driving after using drugs. Today the nation's Drug Czar and Secretary of Transportation were joined by Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), GEICO, Mitsubishi Motors North America, and several driving safety leaders to steer teens clear of pot as they prepare to take on the responsibility of driving. Television advertisements to raise public awareness of the problem of drugged driving will run during the months of September and October.

"Today's teens have gotten the wrong message about marijuana," said John P. Walters, Director of National Drug Control Policy. "Marijuana is harmful and can lead to risky decisions, such as driving while high or riding with drivers who are impaired. We want to encourage parents of new drivers to use this milestone in their teen's life to discuss the dangers of marijuana and being responsible behind the wheel."

"The Bush Administration is committed to the safety of all Americans," said Secretary Norman Y. Mineta. "Teens already have the highest crash risk of any age group, making traffic crashes the leading cause of death for young people age 15-20. Combining drug use with teens' inexperience on the road and risk-taking behavior is a recipe for disaster."

The "Drugged Driving" short report released today from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health shows that, in 2002, between 10 and 18 percent of young drivers age 17 to 21 reported driving under the influence of an illicit drug during the past year. Driving-age teens (age 16-19) are also four times more likely to use marijuana than younger adolescents (age 12-15).

Estimates based on Monitoring the Future and Census Bureau data also show that of the nearly 4 million high school seniors in the United States, approximately one in six (600,000) drive under the influence of marijuana, a number nearly equivalent to those who drive under the influence of alcohol (640,000). Additionally, an estimated 38,000 of these students reported in 2001 that they crashed while driving under the influence of marijuana and 46,000 reported that they crashed while driving under the influence of alcohol.

Marijuana affects concentration, perception, coordination, and reaction time, many of the skills required for safe driving and other tasks. These effects can last up to 24 hours after smoking marijuana. Marijuana use can also make it difficult to judge distances and react to signals and sounds on the road.



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Teens are high-risk drivers and have the highest crash risk of any age group. Nearly one in five 16-year-old drivers is involved in a collision in his or her first year of driving, making motor vehicle crashes the leading cause of death for young people age 15 to 20.

Greater parent involvement, clear rules, and parental supervision are associated with less risky teen behavior, such as marijuana use and driving while high or under the influence of alcohol. Crashes were one-seventh less likely to occur among teens with strong parental monitoring, according to the Journal of Safety Research.

The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign will raise public awareness on the issues of drugged driving and the harmful effects of teen marijuana use through the promotion of free Steer Clear of Pot materials; new Web content on www.TheAntiDrug.com and www.Freevibe.com; a new drivers' safety kit for teens and parents; advertisements on television with drugged driving messages; and partnerships with GEICO, the Department of Transportation, SADD, American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA), American Driver & Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA), Mitsubishi Motors North America, Liberty Mutual, and others to distribute drugged driving and marijuana prevention materials to drivers' education teachers, teens, and parents.

The Media Campaign, SADD, and the Department of Transportation will team up for National Drunk and Drugged Driving Awareness Month in December. SADD, the nation's dominant peer-to-peer youth education and prevention organization, will help distribute teen materials through its estimated 10,000 middle school, high school, and college SADD chapters nationwide.

GEICO, the fifth-largest private passenger auto insurer in the United States, is incorporating the Media Campaign's messages into its existing "Can I Borrow the Car?" teen driving and safety materials and providing co-branded versions of those materials through the Campaign's "New Teen Driver Kit." The company will also distribute co-branded Steer Clear of Pot materials to customers who have new teen drivers in the family and promote the Media Campaign's resources to its 5.5 million policyholders and 22,000 GEICO associates.

Recognizing the importance of keeping the nation's youth drug-free, Mitsubishi Motors North America will leverage its extensive dealership network, strong brand awareness and Web site to bring the Campaign's anti-drug messages and Steer Clear of Pot materials to parents, teens and community leaders. This partnership extends the company's efforts in promoting traffic safety and driving responsibility.

Liberty Mutual, the eighth-largest auto insurer in the U.S., will promote the Steer Clear of Pot and other anti-drug Campaign messages to its 2 million auto and home customers, and 37,000 employees worldwide. Campaign materials will be made available through Liberty Mutual's 360 local personal insurance sales offices as well as through print materials, publications, and the company's Internet and intranet sites.

AAMVA, the national network of departments of motor vehicles (DMVs), and the Governors' Highway Safety Association will distribute materials to state officials and to DMVs across the nation. ADTSEA, which represents driving and traffic safety educators nationwide, will provide classrooms with drugged driving materials. In addition, the Media Campaign, AAMVA, and ADTSEA will collaborate on a revised driving manual and educator materials to enhance drugged-



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driving prevention in drivers' education classes.

To learn more about preventing youth marijuana and other illicit drug use, log on to www.TheAntiDrug.com for parents and www.Freevibe.com for teens.

In 1998, with bipartisan support, Congress created the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign with the goal of educating and enabling young people to reject illicit drugs. Unprecedented in size and scope, the Campaign is a strategically integrated communications effort that combines advertising with public communications outreach to deliver anti-drug messages and skills to America's youth, their parents, and other influential adults.

For more information on the ONDCP National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, visit www.mediacampaign.org

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