

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Board Members & Mission

Board Members

Founder



Betty S. Sembler

Chair



James W. Holton
President, Holton Companies

Secretary / Treasurer

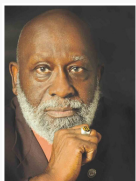


Stephanie Haynes
Community Advocate

Directors



Jim Frishe
President, Blue Herron Consulting, Inc.



T. Willard Fair
President, Greater Miami Urban
League



Calvina Fay
Executive Director, Drug Free America
Foundation & S.O.S., retired 2018

Mission

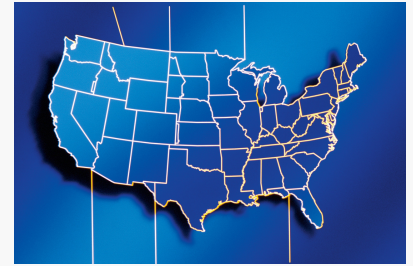
Save Our Society From Drugs (S.O.S.) is a 501(c)(4) national nonprofit organization committed to establishing, promoting, and enabling sound drug laws and policies that will reduce illegal drug use, drug addiction and drug-related illness and death. Our purpose is to help Americans advocate for sound drug policies.

We work to educate our nation's lawmakers and activate grassroots anti-drug coalitions to promote policies that enhance community health and safety.

We provide support and resources to professionals working in fields that are impacted by drug use and abuse such as prevention and treatment providers, medical doctors, lawmakers, teachers, law enforcement officers and others who are working to build a better future.

S.O.S. takes a comprehensive approach to promote sound drug policy that includes education, prevention, abstinence-based treatment, scientific research, and community awareness.

Drug Policy



Save Our Society From Drugs is the only national drug policy organization tracking ALL drug policy legislation at the federal and state levels. Every day our staff looks at legislation introduced in each state, determines if it is appropriate legislation to track, and then categorizes it as pro-drug or anti-drug.

In the last dozen years, S.O.S. has tracked 9,736 state legislative drug policy efforts. Of those, we considered 5,392 pro-drug and defeated 4,148 of them, representing a 77% legislative success rate in the past 12 years!

State Legislation

In 2021 we tracked 1,965 state legislative efforts. Of those, 499 sought to reduce illicit drug use and abuse. The number of anti-drug bill continues to increase slightly each year driven primarily by efforts to mitigate the opioid crisis. Of the anti-drug bills introduced in 2021, 131 were signed into law representing an increase of more than 150%.

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

- Enhanced state prescription drug monitoring programs
- Regulated vaping and tobacco products
- Implemented and enhanced state problem solving courts, such as drug courts, DUI courts, and veterans' courts
- Addressed the opioid epidemic by increased penalties for fentanyl trafficking, expanded access to naloxone, and increased access to Medication Assisted Treatment (MATs), and access to treatment in general.
- Restricted state marijuana programs by addressing marketing, smoking in public, and product labeling.

Unfortunately, 2021 saw a huge upsurge in the number of pro-drug bills introduced at the state level. S.O.S. tracked 1,466 pro-drug state bills. This is a 60% increase over the 2020 “mid-pandemic” number of 881 and was a staggering escalation of more than 250% over 2015’s 416 bills.

Of the 1,466 pro-drug bills, 1,176 bills were defeated. That's an 80% success rate! These results are directly tied to the efforts of S.O.S., including our members and grassroots partners who worked passionately to prevent the normalization and escalation of drug use and abuse.

Sadly, 290 of the pro-drug bills passed allowing primarily, the legalization of recreational marijuana, the expansion of THC concentrates, medical marijuana, hemp, marijuana sales, industry expansion and accommodations, and more. The singular theme of the pro-drug bills was very evident with more than 99% of the 1,466 bills being marijuana related.

Legislative efforts to legalize recreational marijuana yielded approval in four additional states in 2021 including New York, Virginia, New Mexico, and Connecticut. Also in 2021, Alabama legalized medical marijuana and Louisiana decriminalized marijuana both through state legislation. Two states' attempts to legalize marijuana were struck down by the courts: a ballot initiative for recreational marijuana in South Dakota was overturned by a circuit court and a ballot initiative for medical marijuana in Mississippi was reversed by that state's Supreme Court.

Federal Legislation

In 2021, 217 pieces of legislation were introduced through the federal legislature.

- 166 were considered to be anti-drug legislation of which 7 passed (victories) and 159 did not (defeats).
- 51 were considered to be pro-drug bills of which only 1 passed (defeat) and 50 did not (victories).

Interestingly, House Bill 1996 – the SAFE Banking Act, a federal pro-drug bill that would establish a banking system for the illicit marijuana and drug industry was attached by amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act, which is must-pass legislation that funds our military. Grassroots efforts compelled legislators to subsequently remove that amendment. A real victory!



Advocacy & Lobbying

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

Furthering the Conversation

In 2021, S.O.S. successfully disseminated research on drug policy issues and effective strategies to reduce drug abuse by presenting to state associations, community and civic groups and legislative delegation meetings. S.O.S. also partnered with local community coalitions to provide speakers and panelists at town hall meetings and drug summits.

Advocacy and Lobbying

S.O.S. continues to work closely with local coalitions and national colleagues to prepare and submit testimony before state legislative committees to educate lawmakers on the impacts of proposed legislation and to support efforts that put community health and safety first by reducing access to addictive substances. Many of our partners are unable to lobby, and in those instances, S.O.S. takes special care to provide tools that can be used to educate using data-driven talking points and research materials. Many times, S.O.S. is asked to take the lead on specific issues and be a voice for groups whose funding prohibits lobbying.



**OPPOSE THE CANNABIS ADMINISTRATION
AND OPPORTUNITY ACT!**

Draft legislation to federally deschedule marijuana and fully legalize all marijuana products for adults (21+) has been introduced in the U. S. Senate by co-sponsors Senators Cory Booker (D-WI), Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Chuck Schumer (D-NY).

If enacted, the bill would expand access and availability of marijuana, including high potency products, with little oversight.

Overdose deaths in 2020 were 30% higher than the previous year with more than 93,000 lives lost. Americans need legislation to curb the current drug crisis, not a bill that seeks to expand the special interests of industries that profit from addiction.

Click the Take Action! button and send the attached pre-written letter to members of the United States Senate urging them to oppose any efforts that would legalize marijuana! Make sure your voice is heard!

Take Action!

In June, S.O.S. held its first luncheon event in St. Petersburg, Florida in recognition of the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. Attendees heard from Executive Director, Amy Ronshausen, who spoke on how S.O.S. works to advocate for sound drug policies at the local, state and national level and issued call to action for attendees to communicate with policymakers on how substance abuse impacts their communities. At the event Mrs. Betty S. Sembler passed the gavel to the new board chair Jim Holton. As founder, Mrs. Sembler has served as board chair since the organization was established. Attending board members and S.O.S. staff presented Mrs. Sembler with a beautiful glass blown heart sculpture in honor of her heart-driven commitment to advocating for policies that protect public health and strive for a drug free world.



2022 Focus

S.O.S. will actively work to support legislation that addresses the nation's opioid epidemic, expands problem solving courts, combats access to synthetic drugs, enhances prescription drug monitoring programs, prevents youth access to vaping products, and pushes back against the ever growing marijuana lobby.

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

We will continue to push back against groups seeking to legalize illicit drugs and lawmakers who put special interest groups before public health and safety priorities of their constituents. In 2022, S.O.S. will focus our efforts working at the local level in states like Illinois to ensure public safety concerns are heard by local officials considering expanded access to commercialized marijuana.

In 2022, S.O.S. will advocate for federal and state funding for substance abuse primary prevention efforts and will urge the current administration to take a leadership role in addressing the nation's drug crisis. S.O.S. will encourage states to enact legislation that would require Parity for those needing treatment for substance use disorders. As we continue in COVID-19 relief efforts, S.O.S. will urge state and national lawmakers to include strategies that address and mitigate the heightened risks of substance use in the context of the pandemic.

Social Media

Social media provides abundant opportunities to educate and engage individuals on drug policy issues. S.O.S. uses Twitter to engage elected officials and the media on trending drug topics and legislative actions while Facebook is used to share research, media updates and action alerts. Through our posts, S.O.S. reach exceeded 10,500.

 @SaveOurSocietyFromDrugs

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