

# Eagle Forum Report

*founded by Phyllis Schlafly*

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## *Change That Shortchanges U.S.*

### “COURT REFORM” THREATENS CIVIL RIGHTS

by Kelly Shackelford, President, CEO, and Chief Counsel for First Liberty Institute, a nonprofit law firm dedicated to defending religious freedom for all.

**T**he most dangerous political idea of our lifetime is being sold to Americans as “reform.”

But this time, it’s a smokescreen with nothing to do with actual reform and everything to do with power and political revenge.

“Court reform is critical to our democracy,” declared President Joe Biden in his address to the nation in late July as he stepped aside from seeking a second term while moving full speed ahead with a dangerous plan that would pave the way for the far left’s radical agenda. In truth, “court reform” is nothing more than a desperate attack to subvert the legitimacy of the U.S. Supreme Court and rewrite our Constitution.

The driving motivation for most angry court reform advocates comes down to a few Supreme Court decisions that didn’t go their way, namely the originalist decisions in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, which overturned *Roe v. Wade*, and *Trump v. United States* regarding presidential immunity. The over-the-top counterattack is to pack the court with partisan justices to

control outcomes to their liking. It’s a perilous, short-sighted move that would destroy constitutional order and threaten civil liberties, all under the guise of “saving democracy.”

It’s a dangerous proposal, but it’s not the first time a president has sought to exercise raw power over a separate but equal branch of government to manipulate the high court to suit political ends.

In 1937, Democrats in President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s own party rebuffed various reforms he proposed under the magnanimous title, “Reorganization of the Federal Judiciary.” He attempted to add justices to the high court after several of his New Deal initiatives were struck down. The Senate Judiciary Committee labeled Roosevelt’s efforts a “needless, futile, and utterly dangerous abandonment of constitutional principle.”

By thwarting Roosevelt’s political power grab, the 75th Congress hoped subsequent generations would inherit “an independent Court, a fearless Court, a Court that will dare to announce its honest opinions in what it believes to be the defense of the liberties of the people” rather than a court acting “out of fear or sense of obligation.”

Roosevelt’s court reform proposals were never approved or implemented, and public opinion was mobilized against it. But here we are 87 years later staring at the same proposals with a fresh coat of paint.

Before the 2020 election, Joe Biden stated in an interview, “The last thing we need to do is turn the Supreme Court into just a political football,” making light of the notion that he would propose changes to the high court. But shortly after taking residence in the Oval Office, the Biden-Harris administration assembled a 34-member commission, a “bipartisan group of constitutional scholars,” to review multiple options to change the court by adding seats, inserting ethics guidelines, and establishing term limits — all because in Biden’s words, the court was “out of whack.”

Others have jumped on the bandwagon in the multi-faceted effort to destabilize the judiciary. One liberal donor is spending \$30 million supporting the court reform agenda. Demand Justice, an organization pushing for radical court reform, including court packing, says that change is desperately needed and claims the court’s decisions are “badly out-of-touch with the views

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of the majority of Americans prove that the Supreme Court and judiciary as a whole must be updated to reflect modern life and modern values.”

Not surprisingly, Brian Fallon, the founder of Demand Justice, left the organization to take a leadership role in campaign communications for Democratic nominee, Kamala Harris. Harris herself has endorsed the concept of court reform, going so far as to previously say that she was “absolutely open” to court packing.

Many others are calling for court packing — a concentrated effort to stuff the court with enough justices to tip the scale in favor of a radical judicial philosophy. As many as 130 different progressive groups have united to remake the court by adding four justices to the Supreme Court and 200 lower court judges.

This dangerous agenda isn’t going away anytime soon.

While some of the ideas are more subtle than simply packing the court, they all violate the Constitution’s principles of separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary.

The push for term limits is a not-so-subtle political partisanship effort to remove the longest-serving and most conservative Justices — Clarence Thomas, John Roberts, and Samuel Alito. It is unconstitutional and a bad idea. Our Founders said lifetime tenure was required, to avoid the political influence on our Justices.

Another proposal, ethics reform, on the surface sounds like a noble idea. But upon close inspection, it isn’t about accountability, transparency, or any other euphemism. It is about giving enemies of the judiciary the power to punish justices by unleashing an unrelenting onslaught of frivolous investigations and fabricated scandals. Judges must be able to make decisions without fear of partisan retribution from the executive or

legislative branches. And the courts have had their own rules of ethics in place for many decades.

What the banner-waving court reform advocates fail to mention in their passion-filled campaigns is the reasonable level of consensus in the court’s annual docket. In the Court’s most recent 2023-2024 term, of the 70 cases argued 27 resulted in unanimous, 9-0 decisions. Only 11 of the Court’s 6-3 decisions represented what would be considered an ideological split. All the other opinions of the court displayed a balanced mixture of justices from both ideological perspectives. With those results, it’s difficult to make a case that the court is unbalanced and committed to interpreting the Constitution from a conservative, ideological perspective.

The fact remains that the Court reform movement is simply political revenge. A majority of the Court generally follows the text of the Constitution, and it drives liberals nuts. The meaning of the Constitutional text does not change according to modern values, but those advocating a living Constitution need it to change to accomplish their agenda. There is only a true, original meaning of the text or a false and “new” meaning of the text. It is an originalist view of the Constitution that has led the Court to reverse *Roe v. Wade* and restore the First Amendment’s protection of religious liberty in cases like *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*.

Unless jurists follow the text, our civil liberties will be wiped out.

The rule of law is not a guarantee. Attacking or destroying the independence of the judiciary would end one of the most precious gifts all Americans have — their civil liberties. Court reform is quite simply a euphemism for hyper-partisan efforts to end the independent judiciary.


Americans aren’t buying what

liberals are selling. Recent polling commissioned by First Liberty Institute reveals that 87% of Americans believe an independent judiciary is a crucial safeguard of our civil liberties, and 57% believe that Congress forcing ethics reform on the Supreme Court threatens that independence.

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of Americans believe the politicization of the Supreme Court threatens judicial independence, and 59% oppose court-packing.

Every country that has orchestrated this kind of judicial coup has seen the rule of law destroyed. One need look no further than Venezuela, which enjoyed a democratic government but, once the judiciary was politicized and lost its independence, the country fell into complete chaos. When the judiciary is no longer a separate branch, it becomes a nefarious weapon of the political party in power. Americans must understand that what happened in Venezuela could happen in the U.S.

Americans clearly understand that the independence of the judiciary is critical to their freedoms and that politically motivated so-called ‘reform’ threatens judicial independence. Any attempted power grab by Congress to control the Supreme Court would put all our freedoms in jeopardy. Despite the relentless attacks by the left, Americans want Congress to mind its own business and leave the courts alone.

An independent judiciary is the last safeguard of our civil liberties and an essential check on the power of the executive and legislative branches and the fleeting political whims of the culture. Those who care about their freedoms must stand up and speak up against this attempted coup for all Americans today and future generations. 

# LIGHT MARIJUANA USE LINKED TO HEART

by George Citroner, The Epoch Times, who reports on health and medicine, covering topics that include cancer, infectious diseases, and neurodegenerative conditions. He was awarded the Media Orthopedic Reporting Excellence award in 2020 for a story on osteoporosis risk in men. Reprinted with Permission from The Epoch Times (theepochtimes.com)

**L**ighting up a joint once or more a week? That puff of marijuana could be hurting your heart.

A new study finds that even relatively infrequent cannabis use is linked to higher risks of having a heart attack or stroke. The large-scale research presents some evidence about marijuana's impact on cardiovascular health.

## Marijuana Smoking as Risky as Tobacco for Heart Health

Using cannabis is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases, even among non-tobacco smokers, according to a new study published in the *Journal of the American Heart Association*. Previous research had linked marijuana use to heart disease risk, but those findings were often dismissed because many participants also smoked tobacco, which has long been linked to various cardiovascular issues.

In the new study, researchers analyzed data from over 434,000 patients aged 18 to 74, collected between 2016 and 2020 from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey.

About 75% of the study participants said smoking was the most common way they consumed marijuana, but they also reported using edibles and vaping. However, the researchers did not specifically compare the risks of smoking marijuana versus consuming edibles.

## 25% Higher Heart Attack Risk, 42% Greater Stroke Risk

The study found that compared to those who never used marijuana,

daily cannabis smokers had a 25% increased likelihood of heart attack and a 42% greater risk of experiencing strokes.

Among adults at risk for premature cardiovascular disease (defined as men under 55 and women under 65), cannabis use was significantly associated with nearly 40% higher combined odds of coronary heart



disease, heart attack, and stroke, regardless of whether they used traditional tobacco products or not.

The researchers conducted a separate analysis of a smaller subgroup of adults who never smoked tobacco or used nicotine e-cigarettes and still found a significant association between cannabis use and an increased combined risk of developing coronary heart disease, including heart attack and stroke.

"Cannabis smoke is not all that different from tobacco smoke, except for the psychoactive drug: THC vs. nicotine," Abra Jeffers, a data analyst at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston and lead study author, said in a press statement.

The study shows smoking can-

nabis has significant cardiovascular risks, just like smoking tobacco, she noted. "This is particularly important because cannabis use is increasing, and conventional tobacco use is decreasing."

Participants who reported using marijuana only once per week still showed about a 3% increased likelihood of having a heart attack or stroke during the study period. However, the study was not designed to establish whether marijuana use directly caused this increase in risk.

## Legal Weed Fueling Rise in Cannabis Use Across U.S.

While marijuana remains illegal at the federal level, 24 states and Washington, D.C., have legalized recreational cannabis possession and use.

A 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration found more than 48 million people aged 12 or older reported using cannabis at least once, compared to only 25.8 million people in that age range in 2002 — an increase from 11% to 17%. There is also evidence that this trend toward legalization has led to growing numbers of people living with addiction.

Recent data show a significant increase in cannabis usage. In 2007, approximately 10% of people used cannabis, but by 2022, that figure had more than doubled to 22%, according to SAMHSA.

The rise in cannabis consumption

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has also prompted concerns about the potential for marijuana use disorder. One study estimates that about one in three cannabis users may develop this disorder. Another study found that the risk is even greater for those who start using marijuana during their youth or adolescence and for those who use it more frequently.

Regardless of whether more states legalize cannabis, there is a need for more regulation of the forms, content, and marketing of cannabis products to consumers, Ms. Jeffers told The Epoch Times.

“Like tobacco, it should be legal but discouraged,” she said. “Furthermore, more guidance to physicians on screening and counseling for cannabis use is necessary.”

### Legal Pot Hurts People

The research contributes to the growing evidence linking cannabis use with increased cardiovascular-related deaths and highlights the inherent dangers of legalizing it, Dr. Christopher Varughese, an Interventional and General Cardiology physician at Staten Island University Hospital, not associated with the study, told The Epoch Times.


“They found an increased risk of coronary heart disease, myocardial infarction (heart attack), and stroke,” he said. “Legalization of cannabis may place the public at greater risk for future cardiovascular events.”

While the observational study couldn't prove marijuana caused the increased cardiovascular disease risk, the findings suggest cannabis use should be held to the same standards as tobacco regarding health risks, Dr. Varughese noted, emphasizing the need for strong public awareness efforts on the potential future cardiovascular risks.

As more data emerge, there is a clear association between cannabis use and future cardiovascular events,

Dr. Varughese said. The risk increases with more frequent use, independent of tobacco.

“Most importantly, the increased

risk was also observed in younger individuals, highlighting the potential concerns for this population segment,” he said. 

## POT REPLACES TOBACCO

by Anne Schlafly, Chairman, Eagle Forum

**T**hroughout the 20th century, tobacco was sold to Americans as a good habit that was socially acceptable. Glamorous tobacco advertising was very effective in hooking children on the addiction. It took decades for the perception of this legal product to change to a socially unacceptable and dirty habit.

Instead of tobacco, we now have the increasing social acceptance of marijuana with advertising and candies marketed to the youth. Marijuana is only illegal in twelve states. Both presidential nominees have stated that they want to loosen the federal laws against marijuana.


What is the upside of legal marijuana? None. The axiom “legalize it and tax it” so government has more income fails because as more people use the harmful legal marijuana, then government spends more on social services to needy people. More people addicted to marijuana means fewer people who are employable. Employers who are not in the cannabis industry do not want to hire people who use marijuana.

In 2018, before Missouri legalized “medical marijuana,” there were only seven marijuana-related poison control calls for children aged 5 or under. Then, the poison control calls spiked. Sales of legal recreational marijuana began in February 2023. Calls to poison control for children under five years old have increased 2300% since the marijuana laws have loosened in Missouri. This trend is expected to continue as more Missouri-

rians use and misuse marijuana. Now the state is trying to crack down on the selling of cannabis candy, which is packaged to look just like Skittles and gummies. No child can read the fine print that this candy is only for adults.



As more states legalize and commercialize marijuana, Big Marijuana will continue to profit by making more edible products that appeal to children. States must ban the child-appealing marijuana products and require THC-containing products to be sold in child-proof packaging.

It may take many decades for people to realize the harms of marijuana and to make marijuana use as socially unacceptable as tobacco. 

### EAGLE FORUM

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