Study Suggests Legal Pot Would Make Border Safer Than a Massive Wall

It is one of the most ridiculed ideas by a politician in the long and storied history of ridiculed ideas by politicians.

But President Donald Trump shows no signs of backing off his often-made promise to build a massive wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. That's despite the fact that many politicians in his own party oppose it and the initial estimates, as reported by the Washington Post, put the cost of the first 700-mile phase of the project at a staggering $18 billion.

And it doesn't look like Mexico is going to pay for it, as Trump promised over and over during the campaign.

How ridiculed is this idea? The Post article referenced above pointed out that for $18 billion, you could build 32 miles of the wall with stacked dollar bills. That's where things are on this. Now a new study from a trio of researchers suggests the wall is far from the best way to reduce drug trafficking and violence on the border.

A better way? Legalizing pot.

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Less Market, Less Investment

It doesn't take a degree in economics – although two of the three researchers have one – to understand that much of the violence happening on the border is directly related to drug trafficking. Drug cartels in Mexico spend money and allocate resources to the area because the black market for marijuana

is huge in the U.S.

But what if there was no black market?

In their paper, published in The Economics Journal, economists Evelina Gavrilova and Floris Zoutman and sociologist Takuma Kamada considered that possibility.

They found that the legalization of medical marijuana in some border states led to a more than 12 percent reduction in violent crime along the border. The trio looked at statistics from 1999 to 2012, and believe that the recreational markets in Colorado, Oregon and Washington have probably reduced crime even more in the years since.

They wrote: “Our results are consistent with the theory that decriminalization of the production and distribution of marijuana leads to a reduction in violent crime in markets that are traditionally controlled by Mexican drug trafficking organizations.”

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Other Findings

The report also made some other interesting findings.

- Legal pot in Colorado and other states far from the border helped reduce crime in border states by decreasing the size of the cannabis black market
- In the same fashion, Florida has probably helped Texas by legalizing medical marijuana. The researchers think that will reduce crime in the Lone Star State because it is one of the major pathways for marijuana to enter the country
- Cutting off drug supply, such as cocaine seizures in Columbia, increases the price of illegal drugs and therefore leads to higher levels of violence around drug

trafficking as cartels fight for a bigger share of higher profits

So, building a wall and cracking down on legal state marijuana systems – two potential events that could happen in the Trump Administration – could actually increase violence on the border, if the researchers are correct, in addition to costing billions.

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