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Standing up for public health

In light of the nation's first widespread, marijuana-based public health crisis, SAM has stepped up to the plate to serve the interests of the public.

The overwhelming sea change with regard to marijuana policy in the United States is palpable.

With the FDA and CDC confirming the nation's widespread marijuana vaping crisis, the public and lawmakers alike are bringing discussions of legalization to a halt. Dozens of youth and adults are losing their lives to dangerous THC vapes, and thousands more are developing a lung illness.

This is exactly what we predicted when Big Tobacco, no stranger to public health crises, began consolidating the industry.

In spite of the pot vaping crisis, rising youth use of the drug, and more people losing their lives on the road, the marijuana industry continues to sell these THC vapes, oils, youth-friendly gummies, and candies.

When the nation needed a voice of reason in the midst of marijuana industry spin and a national public health crisis, SAM and its partners were prepared to fill the void. We defeated legalization despite overwhelming odds in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and nearly a dozen other states. In New Jersey, we were outspent by the industry $1.3 million to $15,000 - and we won.

At the federal level, we expanded to the largest government affairs footprint in the history of our organization. We then went on to prevent the SAFE Banking Act and STATES Act from federally expanding the industry.
Commentary: The rush to profit from legal marijuana is leaving black neighborhoods in the dust. Chicago’s Black Caucus and others should keep pushing.

Given the vaping crisis, N.J. should not legalize marijuana, an ex-presidential adviser says

By Kevin Sabet

BIG MARIJUANA COPIES BIG TOBACCO'S PLAYBOOK. LET'S NOT MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE AGAIN

OPINION

Keep ‘Big Marijuana’ out of Connecticut

By KEVIN SABET

GUEST COLUMN: Protect Colorado’s health, ban marijuana concentrates

Luke Niforatos Feb 24, 2019

Cuomo's marijuana mistake: Legalizing pot is bad for young people and public health

By KEVIN A. SABET DEC 17, 2018 6:00 PM
In the media, we found unprecedented success in virtually every metric. We found particular success in educating the press on the source of the vaping crisis and driving the narrative toward holding the marijuana industry accountable. The discussion is now universally about THC when at first many thought it was nicotine-only.

At the beginning of the year, we saw Altria make a roughly $2 billion investment in the marijuana industry, coupled with a $14 billion investment in Juul. This consolidation would haunt our nation only 8 months later when the marijuana vaping crisis broke out. Now, Imperial Brands, the fifth-largest tobacco company on earth, has invested more than $100 million in pot.

It is now fair to say that marijuana is officially a pet project of Big Tobacco. Given this overwhelming investment and lobbying interest, our continued success can only be credited to you, the public, our donors, and allies’ continued support.

Each year, we are told the ship has sailed on marijuana. Each year, the science, the public, and communities across the nation rise up to prove this assertion to be folly.

We are prepared to fight at this pivotal point in our nation, particularly here at the turning of the tides on this issue. Our scientific advisors and partners are standing with us and in 2020 we will all rise to the highest heights.

Kevin A. Sabet, PhD  
President & CEO  
SAM & SAM Action

Jon Talcot  
Chairman  
SAM
New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut lead Congress in putting public health first

2019 began with promises from Governors in New York and New Jersey to legalize marijuana quickly. Connecticut was considered an easy win for the pot industry.

Then SAM and its allies stepped in.

In New York, we found strong partnerships with the state PTA and medical societies, along with law enforcement and other groups who helped stop marijuana commercialization in what was heralded by The New York Times as "well-coordinated opposition."

In New Jersey and Connecticut, lawmakers dropped plans to commercialize the drug after widespread coalitions led by social justice groups and minority caucuses said "No" to another predatory drug industry.

On the federal level, we expanded our government affairs team to unprecedented levels and found new champions in the House and Senate. As a result, we were able to block passage of bills such as the SAFE Banking Act, which would have allowed billions in investment into marijuana, and the STATES Act, which would have effectively legalized marijuana at the federal level.
SAM President and CEO, Dr. Kevin Sabet, being told by United States Surgeon General Dr. Jerome Adams, "He's right!" during a presentation at Oxford House convention in Washington, D.C., August 30th, 2019

**In 2019, communities "opted out" of pot sales at unprecedented levels**

California: **80%** of localities banned sales  
Michigan: **80%** of localities banned sales  
Colorado: Roughly **70%** of localities banned sales  
Massachusetts: More than **50%** of localities banned sales  
Illinois: A massive "Opt Out" movement formed and majority bans are likely
Above: SAM Scientific Advisory Board member, Dr. Christine Miller, testifying before a New Hampshire State Senate Committee in what was to become a whirlwind year of SAM advocacy for her.

Right: SAM President and CEO, Dr. Kevin Sabet, opening the Annual SAM Summit in Atlanta, GA.

Left: SAM Chief of Staff, Luke Niforatos, and allies in New York unveiling one of SAM’s newest campaigns sharing facts on legalization using blown-up tobacco boxes.
Educating the Public, Press, and Lawmakers on Smart Marijuana Policy

SAM influenced policy at the state and national level, and was featured by the top press and media.

A few of SAM's many accomplishments this year:

- SAM expanded its federal government affairs footprint to the biggest it has ever been by bringing on multiple new team members
- Defeated legalization in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Minnesota, New Mexico, and more
- Helped push forward proactive congressional legislation allowing more research on marijuana
- Conducted billboard and other media campaigns across the country
- Implemented new tools to help affiliates and supporters be heard by their legislators

Right: SAM Vice President of Government Affairs, Garth Van Meter, presenting to U.S. Senate staffers along with Scientific Advisory Board member Dr. Christine Miller and MAMA founder Tiffany Davidson
Equipping You with Facts

Our work, reviewed by our science advisory board, is cited regularly by major government agencies and experts.

The Money Trail: Where Big Pot Meets Big Politics

44% of Americans say they would be less likely to support a candidate who took money from the pot industry.

Has your member of Congress taken money from the marijuana industry?
Above: Dr. Kevin Sabet speaking at a press conference in Albany, NY, with state allies and legislators.

Below: SAM Vice President of Government Affairs, Garth Van Meter, testifies before the U.S. Senate Banking Committee.
2019 was the year the tide started turning. In 2020, we will build on the success of this growing movement.

Below: SAM Outreach Associate Will Jones
2019 saw the sea change in support for marijuana as facts began to scream louder than industry marketing. SAM brought the movement forward in new and innovative ways, keeping in mind what is needed for success in 2020.

Thanks to support from the public, SAM was able to grow its government affairs team to the largest it has ever been, particularly to engage more on the federal level.

Given the nation's first ever widespread marijuana-based public health crisis, our efforts cannot be more important. This year, SAM's annual summit brought together federal, state, and local officials and some of the world's foremost scientists to lead the way.

SAM's success in executing its regional education and advocacy model in the states, particularly New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, has given rise to a broad array of new coalition partners, including the mighty New York State PTA. We will continue to build on these partnerships in 2020.

Our commitment to science has never been stronger. In 2019, we engaged our scientific advisory board more than ever before, enlisting them in testimony and other public facing projects at a time when the public needed them most.

In 2020, SAM is anxious to unveil a national legal initiative that will once and for all put the marijuana industry on notice.

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