Ballot Initiatives Are the Clear Winner in the 2020 Election

From drug decriminalization to abortion rights, these measures will affect our work to end the HIV epidemic.

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This election has been contentious and hard fought. While a lot of focus has been placed on the presidential election, there were several successful ballot initiatives that affect our work to end the HIV epidemic.

Drug legalization and decriminalization:

Multiple drug legalization and decriminalization ballot measures passed. A total of six states and Washington, D.C., had some form of drug legalization or decriminalization measures on their ballot. New Jersey and Arizona legalized cannabis. Voters in Montana voted to legalize, regulate and tax cannabis while also setting the legal age for use at 21.

Decriminalization had several wins in other states as well. Voters in South Dakota voted to allow medical cannabis use. Mississippi voters even approved an initiative to begin a medical cannabis program for those with debilitating conditions.

In addition to these states, Washington, D.C., decriminalized psychedelic mushrooms. The state of Oregon decriminalized the possession of heroin, methamphetamine, LSD, oxycodone and other drugs. While the ballot initiative does not legalize the growth, sale or distribution of psychedelic mushrooms, it does make the policing and prosecution a low-level priority in both areas.

Abortion rights:

Other ballot initiatives on election night included action on abortion rules in both Louisiana and Colorado. Louisiana voters passed one of the strictest abortion ballot initiatives, greatly restricting access statewide. Colorado voters, on the other hand, rejected a 22-week abortion ban, with 60% of voters against the ban.

Puerto Rico statehood:

Statehood for Puerto Rico was also on the ballot in the commonwealth. Voters supported by a margin of 52-to-48 in favor of the statehood referendum. While this move is likely to be symbolic due to opposition from Republicans in Congress, this is the first time the vote has passed with a

large voter turnout. Puerto Rico has been a U.S. territory since 1898, and Puerto Ricans have been U.S. citizens since 1917. Many experts believe that this is a sign that Puerto Rico is moving toward wanting equality.

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