

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: **October 26, 2000**

## **Will California's Prop. 36 mark the beginning of the end of the Drug War?**

The treatment-instead-of-prison option is spreading across the country

**WASHINGTON, DC** — Should every one of the 458,131 Americans currently in prison for using drugs be set free so they can get mandatory drug treatment?

**Yes, say Libertarians — because such a program would mark the beginning of the end of the failed War on Drugs.**

And California voters will have the opportunity to take the next big step in that direction in November when they vote on Proposition 36, an initiative that would require nonviolent drug offenders to be sentenced to treatment instead of prison.

"Peaceful people who haven't harmed anybody except maybe themselves don't deserve to be locked in steel cages and have their lives destroyed," said Harry Browne, the Libertarian Party's presidential candidate.

"That's why every nonviolent drug offender in California — and every other state — should be freed from prison and allowed to live their lives in peace."

Under Proposition 36, people convicted of possessing or using controlled substances would be sentenced to probation and drug treatment rather than prison. The measure would reroute up to 36,000 people annually away from prison, saving California taxpayers about \$750 million a year in incarceration costs.

**Arizona and New York have already implemented similar programs, Browne noted — raising the possibility that the treatment-instead-of-prison option could become a nationwide trend.**

"California voters took matters into their own hands and put Proposition 36 on the ballot because politicians can't shake their addiction to the Drug War," he said. "It's more evidence that ordinary Americans want a drug peace — not a drug war."

Passage of Proposition 36, currently leading in the polls, may also pave the way for releasing drug offenders in other states, said Browne — since 458,131 Americans are behind bars for using or selling drugs, according to a study by the Justice Policy Institute.

"Those 458,131 people deserve to be released," he said. "The majority of occasional drug users are productive citizens whose personal lives should be out-of-bounds to politicians."

"The fact is, most Americans targeted by the War on Drugs pose no more threat to society than the Americans targeted by the War on Alcohol earlier in this century. The only real combatants in the War on Drugs are politicians, who use it as an excuse to attack innocent people, loot the taxpayer, and pillage the Constitution."