



# FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #258 — OCT. 30, 2012

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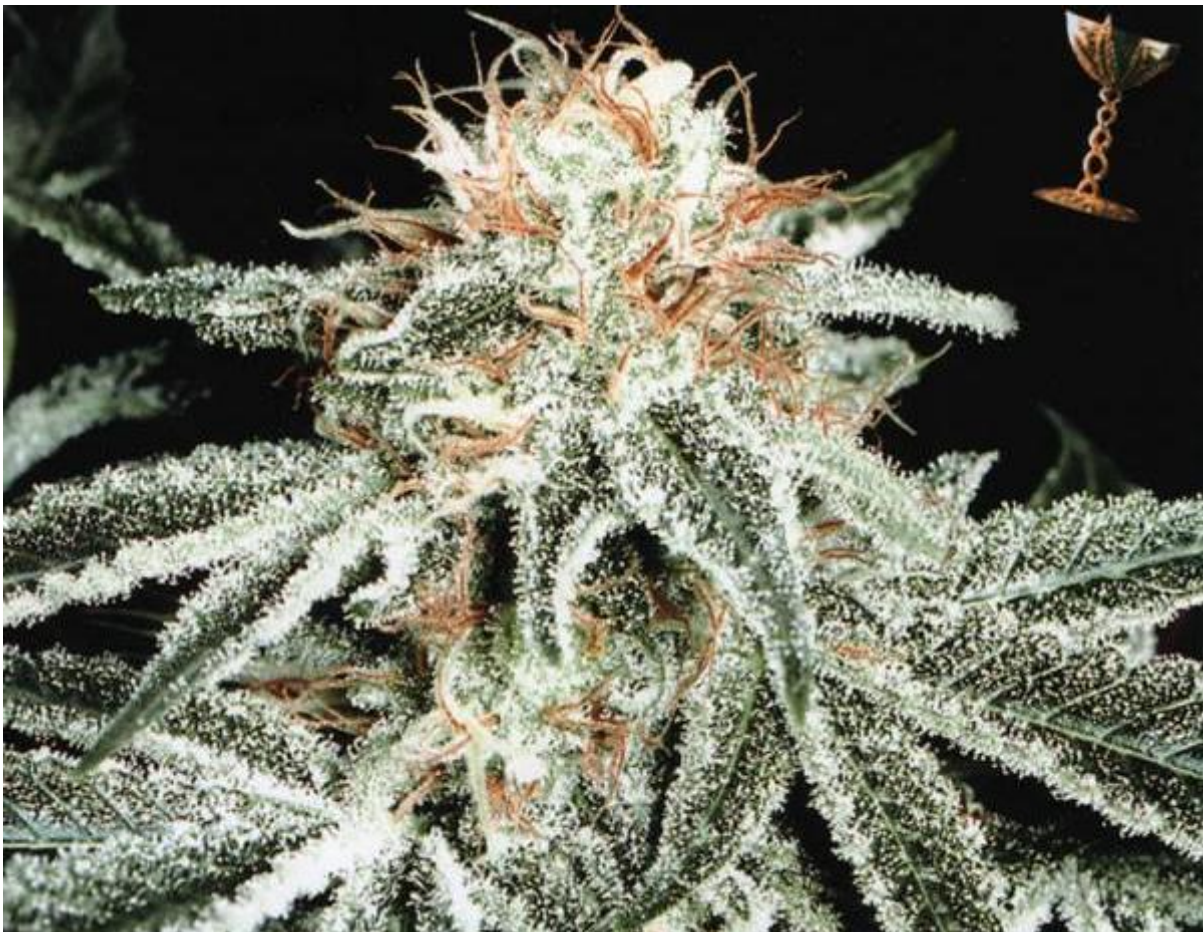
## **Vote for Pot?**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 30, 2012)

Today's article urges the conservative Middle Way of decriminalization and watchfulness, and I concur.

"Why Legalizing Marijuana on Election Day Might Not Be a Good Idea" by Tony Dokoupil, The Daily Beast

Oct. 29, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/10/29/why-legalizing-marijuana-on-election-day-might-not-be-a-good-idea.html>)



(Voters in two states will decide on Election Day whether ending the prohibition on pot is a good idea. But before they do, they should know what might go wrong.)

No government has ever created a commercial pot market. But next week voters in Colorado and Washington State are poised to do just that, passing ballot initiatives that legalize, tax, and regulate marijuana much like alcohol. Both efforts are polling above 50 percent, but regardless of whether they pass, the country is bending toward historic reforms and the remaining prohibitionists are on the run.

Only about one in three Americans think pot should remain illegal, and that shrinking block of opposition is poorly organized and underfunded, producing no formidable spokesperson, not even a sad-sack orator to argue futilely, that legalization is the devil's work. "It's actually hard for us to find people to debate," says Rob Kampa, cofounder of the Marijuana Policy Project, a leading national reform organization. "I think a lot of folks have given up."

But such a profound policy shift deserves a two-sided debate. And, yes, despite the gin-clear failures of prohibition and the face-raking lies told about marijuana in the past, there remains a prohibitionist case to be made. This much is obvious: the upsides of legalization have been wildly oversold, and the potential downsides blithely ignored. I'd like to correct that balance, not because I support prohibition but because I think legalization should succeed or fail on the merits, as much as they can be known.

Perhaps the best neutral source on the subject is *Marijuana Legalization: What Everyone Needs to Know*, published earlier this year by Oxford University Press. The book is the work of four scholars who collectively bring nearly 70 years of experience to the issue. Because there is no "objective" choice on marijuana policy, they provide a stew of good data and best guesses: the raw material for an honest, logical debate they hope will benefit all sides. In the end, however, the prohibitionist side seems to benefit most of all.

The case against legalization begins with a defense of its opposite: the benefits of prohibition. Reformers sometimes say prohibition is pointless, because everyone who wants to use pot already does. But as state laws have softened, pot use has risen sharply. More than three million people started smoking it regularly in the past five years, and the rate of high-school experimentation is at a 30-year high. One in 15 high school seniors are smoking daily or near daily. And when a kid first lights up at about age 16, it's usually not with a cigarette.

Prohibition prevents an even more tremendous uptick, according to *Marijuana Legalization*. Remove it and you can expect a doubling or even tripling of the existing market, a spike to levels far surpassing any on record, and this in a country that already consumes the plant at three times the global average. What would be the health and welfare cost of such an explosion? The honest answer is: we don't know. No one actually knows what legalizing marijuana will do to adult use, teen experimentation, and public health and safety overall. No one knows because no modern society has ever tried it.

We know enough, however, for serious concern. The mantra of marijuana legalization is "Safer than Alcohol," which—to be fair—is generally true. But safer than alcohol is not the same as "safe." Every year about 375,000 people end up in the ER with marijuana-related "adverse reactions," more than any drug other than cocaine. Some of those cases are the result of multiple drug interactions, where marijuana gets the blame while cocaine does the damage. But for many tens of thousands of ER visits marijuana is the only drug mentioned. And there's even data suggesting that, as the authors of *Marijuana Legalization* put it, "marijuana can kill." Between 1999 and 2007, the Centers for Disease Control, somewhat curiously, attributed 26 deaths to cannabis use—half in the subcategory "dependence."

But at least pot isn't addictive, right? Wrong. More than 4 million people self-report behavior that meets the clinical criteria for marijuana dependency or abuse. The "capture rate," as scholars call it, was once about 9 percent, according to one study, but for people who start before age 25—as almost everyone does today—it jumps to 15 percent, the same capture rate as alcohol and just a percentage point less than cocaine. Drug treatment programs for marijuana have five times the number of enrollees as they did just two decades ago. Most are referred by the U.S. criminal justice system, but many are not—and enrollment has more than doubled in European and Australian programs as well.

The most common explanation is that pot has grown more potent over that period. In the 1960s and '70s, the percentage of THC (the stuff that gets you high) in good bud was usually less than 10 percent. Today, it's often 15 percent and higher, with average potency more than doubling since the mid-1990s, according to tests run on seized pot.

Marijuana has also become more variable, coming in hundreds of strains and edible forms. One medical marijuana company makes a chocolate truffle with 60 times the THC of a joint. Others make hash, hash oil, and specialty bud with more than 25 percent THC. This isn't automatically a problem, especially if potency means people use less to get high. But it's hard to judge whether your first truffle has hit the spot before you have an urge to eat another. And a greater percentage of THC means a greater high—so much greater that the Netherlands has proposed policing all products with 15-percent-THC-and-up like "hard drugs."

The upsides of legalization have been wildly oversold, and the potential downsides blithely ignored.

This high potency pot is pricey, and comprises only a fraction of the existing black market. But, again, that's only because of prohibition. If legalization were passed, high potency products would probably fall in price and blanket the market, according to *Marijuana Legalization*. That's worrying because even studies of low-power pot use—the only kind of studies available—show significant risks, especially for young people. Research released this past summer connected teenage pot use to a permanent drop in IQ between the first puff and early middle age. Other emerging literature suggests that pot use elevates the risk of schizophrenia and psychotic symptoms.

Besides harming themselves, pot users also put others at risk: driving high raises one's likelihood of crashing—and driving with a little booze and little pot is much more dangerous than driving with either alone. Marijuana use may also have measurable domestic costs. Only two holidays a year show a spike in sudden-infant-deaths: New Year's Day is one, and the other is the day after 4/20, when pot use is celebrated.

Finally, there are the long-term ramifications of legalization. Under prohibition, marijuana is an out-of-sight product with little branding and virtually no advertising. Expect that to change. The alcohol and tobacco industries traditionally get 80 percent of their profits from heavy users, and there's every reason to believe that marijuana sellers would need at least the same ratio. That means the pot business could be the basis for a third huge, blood-sucking vice industry, dependent on converting kids and supporting heavy users. "If we create a licit market," write the authors of "Marijuana Legalization," "we should expect the industry's product design, pricing and marketing to be devoted to creating as much addiction as possible."

Is there anything good that would come with legalization? Reformers argue that legalizing weed would goose the economy, free law enforcement resources to pursue more serious crime, and unclog the criminal justice system. They say it would empty prisons and undercut the black market. The problem is: none of this is necessarily true.

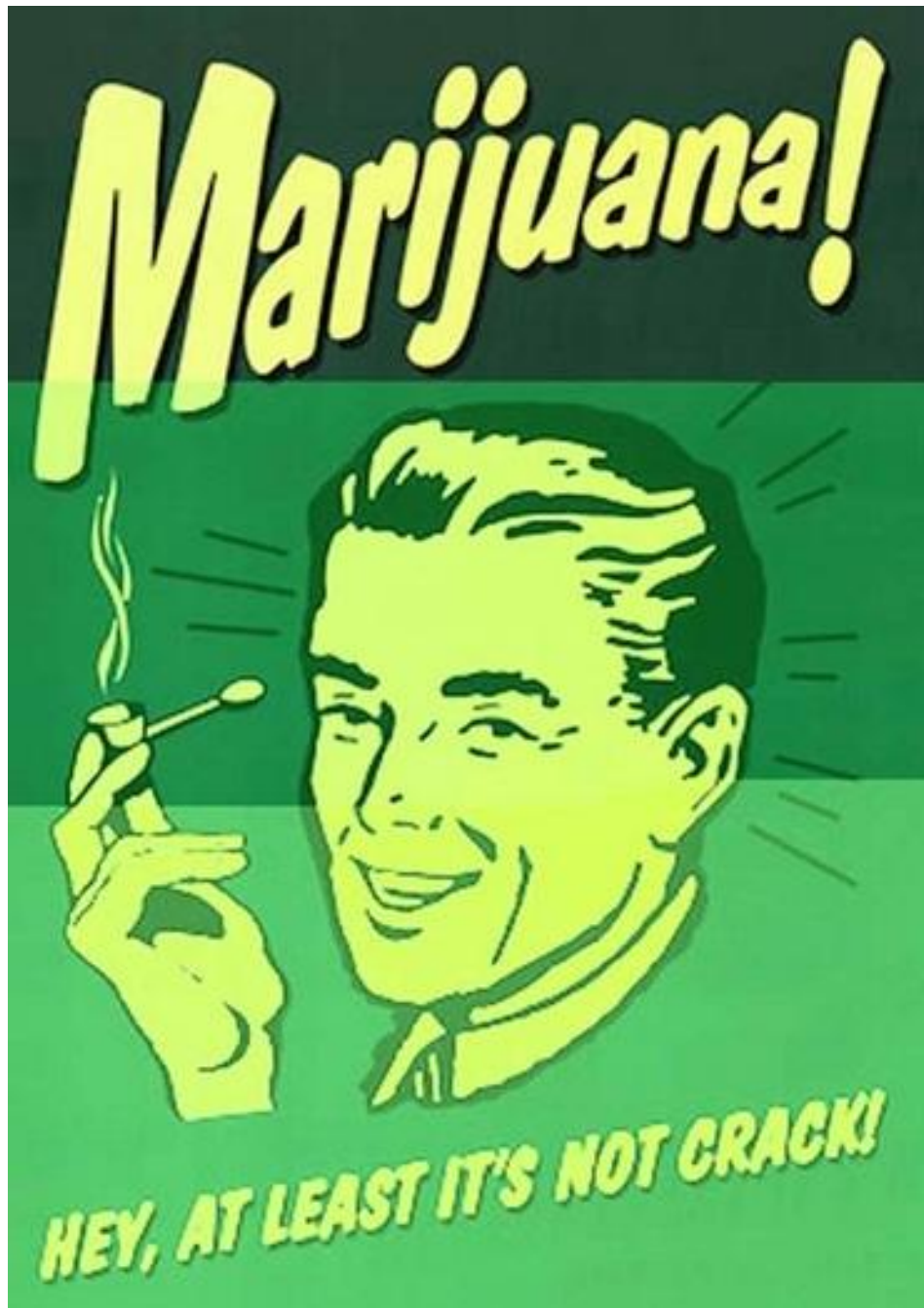
Start with the economics. Marijuana is not America's largest cash crop, contrary to a boast so widely repeated it's assumed to be true. The value at the farm-gate is no more than \$4.3 billion, or "somewhere between almonds and hay," according to authors of "Marijuana Legalization." Sales would skyrocket with legalization, but prices would plummet, deflating the overall market value. Bottom line: pot's not the new corn.

It's also not a surefire tax winner. The proposed tax is between \$30 and \$60 an ounce. Tobacco tax evasion is rampant at a fraction of that rate. And even if all the tax dollars came in, much of it would go not to schools or other worthy programs but to the costs of regulating and enforcing the new marijuana law. Lastly, because legal pot would be so easy grow, its job-creating power would be weak. It probably wouldn't support more than 15,000 growers and an army of minimum-wage service workers—not the kind of jobs someone touts on the campaign trail.

As for the war on pot, it's just not as high stakes as you might assume. About 750,000 people are arrested on possession charges every year, a howlingly large number. But virtually none of those folks end up in prison. Fewer than 400 people are serving state or federal sentences for marijuana possession alone, and many of those people plead down to that charge, or have serious histories of violence. Legalization wouldn't mean the end of marijuana arrests either, because police will still be called on to enforce the new laws, just as they do with alcohol. And it wouldn't mean the end of the Mexican gangs, which, contrary to another common boast, are diversified enough to survive entirely without marijuana profits.

And yet despite all this I still am not a prohibitionist. As the *Seattle Times* recently put it in an editorial endorsing legalization in Washington State, the relevant question isn't whether marijuana is good: "It is whether prohibition is good. It is whether the people who use marijuana shall be subject to arrest, and whether the people who supply them shall be sent to prison. The question is whether the war on marijuana is worth what it costs."

Quite obviously, the answer is no. In fact, of all the available options the status quo of arresting hundreds of thousands of people—most of them nonwhite, poor, and in for a world of collateral damage as a result of their arrest—is probably the least attractive choice, worse only than full legalization. The better decision is incremental reforms at the state level and a hands-off approach from the feds. Let people grow pot, and sell it, but not for profit, and without advertising, and in a tightly regulated marketplace. Tinker every year, adding new provisions and privileges as much needed new research comes in. And always update the law with a sunset provision. That way the process can't be hijacked by lobbyists and special interests—and only one thing goes up in smoke.

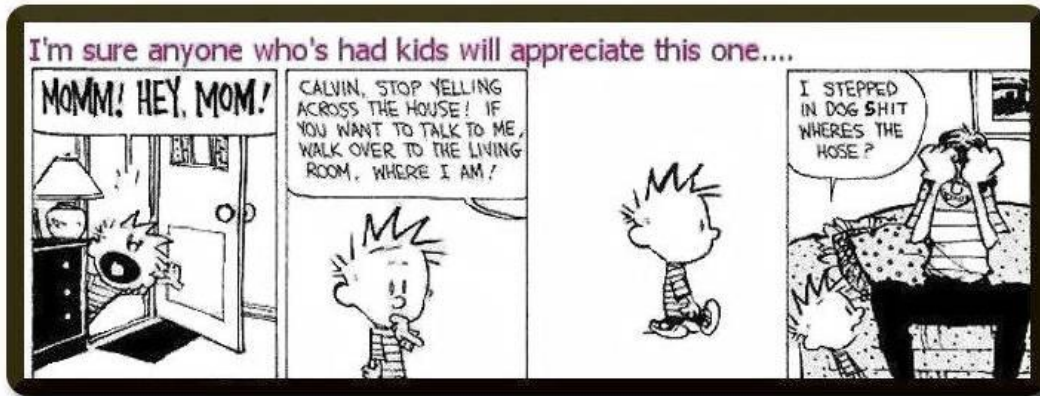


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<a href="#">20121029-01</a>	07:47	Marci	Cartoon: Stop Yelling Across the House
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## STOP YELLING ACROSS THE HOUSE



<a href="#">20121029-02</a>	12:26	Ben	"Check Out Joss Whedon's Hilarious Mitt Zombie Spoof"
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This looks incredible; will have to watch it when I get home tonight..

"Check Out Joss Whedon's Hilarious Mitt Zombie Spoof" (w/ video) by Erik Kain, *Forbes*

Oct. 29, 2012, (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/erikkain/2012/10/29/check-out-joss-whedons-hilarious-mitt-zombie-spoof/>)

(*Avengers* director Joss Whedon gives Romney a boost just in time for the Zombie Apocalypse.)

Video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=6TiXUF9xbTo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=6TiXUF9xbTo).



It is my firm belief that politicians of all stripes, beliefs, and political persuasions should be mocked regularly and without mercy whether they're on your "team" or otherwise.

The people who hold the keys to the city, and who wield great power over the lives of millions both in the United States and abroad, should never be treated like royalty, should not be shielded from spoof and satire.

And so it was with great pleasure that I stumbled on Joss Whedon's Mitt Romney zombie apocalypse campaign spot:

I'll note that I find this sort of thing a welcome balm to all the actually negative, fear-mongering, and mind-numbingly serious ads we get these days.

I understand they're effective. I understand that statistically going with a negative campaign is more likely to succeed.

But they're wearisome and trite and pathetic, and both sides play dirty and neither comes away clean.

Naturally, all that's beside the point. We're talking about zombies here, which is perfect because last night was *The Walking Dead* night, and Halloween – and the election – are just around the corner.

So where's the Obama counterpart to this? Surely someone has likened the president to the undead by now...?

<a href="#">20121029-03</a>	14:07	Art	Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast")
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Beckie and I had the pleasure of visiting this ship and talking to many of the crew while it was tied up in southern Spain on a round-the-world trip. Most of the crew were just kids. Although the ship did have auxiliary power, it was a fully functional 18th century sailing ship. They were pleased with themselves at the time for having just gone through the Straits of Gibraltar under full sail. Quite an experience.

This report has two of the crew missing, let's hope it is wrong. I'm sure Romney will find a way to blame the President.

"Sandy Gains Power and Aims for Northeast" by AP

Oct. 29, 2012, (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=163846898>)

About 90 miles off Cape Hatteras, N.C., the Coast Guard rescued 14 crew members by helicopter from the HMS Bounty, a replica 18th-century sailing ship that sank in the storm. The Coast Guard searched for two other crew members. The ship was built for the 1962 Marlon Brando film *Mutiny on the Bounty*.

The rescued had donned survival suits and life jackets and boarded two lifeboats after the ship began taking on water. They were plucked from 18-foot seas just before sunrise.

[Continue reading at NPR...](#)

20121029-04 14:22 Ben Photo: Today's Healthy Lunch at Apple

"Back in my salad days..."

Well, that's today. Delicious! You can see what's in it: mix of spring mix and Romaine with chicken, cukes, carrots, feta, cheddar, garbanzo beans, watermelon radish, all the seeds, nuts, berries and herbs plus a scant quarter-dipper of house-made orange habanero vinaigrette. All fresh, all good, and I rationalized a 'good boy' cookie.



20121029-05 18:32 SteveB "A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink and Shift"

This is the way unregulated and unethical businesses treat the American worker. A "job" used to be a job, and still is in Bolivia because it's the law! Can you imagine living and supporting a family in the US in 2012 on \$16,500/year?

But I'm sure Mitt will fix this problem, just like he'll fix everything, right? The source of all our problems is that damned, lazy 47%—the Obama voters and the part-time workers!

"A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink and Shift" by Steven Greenhouse, *The New York Times*

Oct. 27, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/28/business/a-part-time-life-as-hours-shrink-and-shift-for-american-workers.html?pagewanted=all&r=1&>)

(Jamba Juice uses powerful scheduling software that even uses weather forecasts, so more people work on busy hot days.)

(SPRING VALLEY, CA) Since the Fresh & Easy grocery chain was founded five years ago, it has opened 150 stores in California and positioned itself as a hip, socially responsible company.

A cross between Whole Foods and Trader Joe's, the company brags that its house brands have no artificial colors or trans fats, that two-thirds of its produce is grown locally and that its main distribution center is powered by a \$13 million solar installation.

But in one crucial respect, Fresh & Easy is just like the vast majority of large American retailers: most employees work part-time, with its stores changing many of their workers' schedules week to week.

At its store here, just east of San Diego, Shannon Hardin oversees seven self-checkout stations, usually by herself. Typically working shifts of five or six hours, she hops between stations — bagging groceries, approving alcohol purchases, explaining the checkout system to shoppers and urging customers to join the retailer's loyalty program, all while watching for shoplifters.

"I like it. I'm a people person," said Ms. Hardin, 50, who used to work as an office assistant at a construction company until times went bad.

But after nearly five years at Fresh & Easy, she remains a part-time worker despite her desire to work full-time. In fact, all 22 employees at her store are part-time except for the five managers.

She earns \$10.90 an hour, and with workweeks averaging 28 hours, her yearly pay equals \$16,500. "I can't live on this," said Ms. Hardin, who is single. "It's almost impossible."

While there have always been part-time workers, especially at restaurants and retailers, employers today rely on them far more than before as they seek to cut costs and align staffing to customer traffic. This trend has frustrated millions of Americans who want to work full-time, reducing their pay and benefits.

"Over the past two decades, many major retailers went from a quotient of 70 to 80 percent full-time to at least 70 percent part-time across the industry," said Burt P. Flickinger III, managing director of the Strategic Resource Group, a retail consulting firm.

No one has collected detailed data on part-time workers at the nation's major retailers. However, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has found that the retail and wholesale sector, with a total of 18.6 million jobs, has cut a million full-time jobs since 2006, while adding more than 500,000 part-time jobs.

Technology is speeding this transformation. In the past, part-timers might work the same schedule of four- or five-hour shifts every week. But workers' schedules have become far less predictable and stable. Many retailers now use sophisticated software that tracks the flow of customers, allowing managers to assign just enough employees to handle the anticipated demand.

"Many employers now schedule shifts as short as two or three hours, while historically they may have scheduled eight-hour shifts," said David Ossip, founder of Dayforce, a producer of scheduling software used by chains like Aéropostale and Pier One Imports.

Some employers even ask workers to come in at the last minute, and the workers risk losing their jobs or being assigned fewer hours in the future if they are unavailable.



The widening use of part-timers has been a bane to many workers, pushing many into poverty and forcing some onto food stamps and Medicaid. And with work schedules that change week to week, workers can find it hard to arrange child care, attend college or hold a second job, according to interviews with more than 40 part-time workers.

To be sure, many people prefer to work part time — for instance, college students eager for extra spending money and older people earning money for presents during the holiday season.

But in two leading industries — retailing and hospitality — the number of part-timers who would prefer to work full-time has jumped to 3.1 million, or two-and-a-half times the 2006 level, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In retailing alone, nearly 30 percent of part-timers want full-time jobs, up from 10.6 percent in 2006. The agency found that in the retail and wholesale sector, which includes hundreds of thousands of small stores that rely heavily on full-time workers, about 3 in 10 employees work part-time.

Retailers and restaurants use so many part-timers not only because it gives them more flexibility, but because it significantly cuts payroll costs.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, part-time workers in service jobs received average compensation of \$10.92 an hour in June, which includes \$8.90 in wages plus benefits of \$2.02. Full-time workers in that sector averaged 57 percent more in total compensation — \$17.18 an hour, made up of \$12.25 in wages and \$4.93 in benefits. Benefit costs are far lower for part-timers because, for example, just 21 percent of them are in employer-backed retirement plans, compared with 65 percent of full-timers.

At the Fresh & Easy store here, Ms. Hardin is forever urging her boss to give her more hours, she said, but instead, “they turn around and hire more people.” Some weeks, her boss gives her an extra shift when a co-worker is sick or on vacation.

Officials of Fresh & Easy, which is owned by Tesco, the largest supermarket company in Britain, declined to be interviewed. But the company noted that its entry-level pay was \$10 an hour, substantially higher than at most retailers, with quarterly bonuses on top of that. Also, the company said it offered excellent benefits, including health insurance to anyone averaging more than 20 hours a week.

Ms. Hardin said her recent quarterly bonuses averaged less than \$200, and while she appreciated the health insurance, she often could not afford the co-pays to see a doctor.

To supplement her income, she moonlights 15 or so weekends a year as a security guard at San Diego Chargers and San Diego State football games. But she still has such a hard time making ends meet, she said, that she has gone to the movies just three times in the last five years. Nor does she own a television.

“A couple of people offered me a used TV, but I can’t afford cable,” she said. “I have a tooth that’s falling apart, but I can’t afford the crown for it.”

### Juggling Schedules

At the Jamba Juice shop at 53rd Street and Lexington Avenue in Manhattan, along with the juice oranges and whirring blenders is another tool vital to the business: the Weather Channel.

The shop’s managers frequently look at the channel’s Web site and plug the temperature and rain forecast into the software they use to schedule employees.

“Weather has a big effect on our business,” said Nicole Rosser, Jamba’s New York district manager.

If the mercury is going to hit 95 the next day, for instance, the software will suggest scheduling more employees based on the historic increase in store traffic in hot weather. At the 53rd Street store, Ms. Rosser said, that can mean seven employees on the busy 11-to-2 shift, rather than the typical four or five.

Such powerful scheduling software, developed by companies like Dayforce and Kronos over the last decade, has been widely adopted by retail and restaurant chains. The Kronos program that Jamba bought in 2009 breaks down schedules into 15-minute increments. So if the lunchtime rush at a particular shop slows down at 1:45, the software may suggest cutting 15 minutes from the shift of an employee normally scheduled from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Karen Luey, Jamba's chief financial officer, said the scheduling software "helped us take 400, 500 basis points out of our labor costs," or 4 to 5 percentage points, a savings of millions of dollars a year.

At Jamba Juice, which has 770 outlets, managers used to piece together their stores' weekly schedules on an Excel spreadsheet. It took managers about two hours to slot in 25 to 30 employees, all generally part-time except for the store manager and one or two shift managers. With the Kronos software, scheduling takes just 30 minutes.

The software keeps tabs on when workers are available, their skills and who makes the most sales per hour. While such software is a powerful tool, management's judgment is still important, said Aron J. Ain, Kronos's chief executive. "The budget is how many people you need at a certain time," he said, "but the magic is deciding who is to work at what time."

The rise of big-box retailers like Walmart, with their long operating hours and complex staffing needs, has contributed to the increase in part-timers.

Mr. Flickinger, the retail consultant, said when Walmart spread nationwide and opened hundreds of 24-hour stores in the 1990s, that created intense competitive pressures and prompted many retailers to copy the company's cost-cutting practices, including its heavy reliance on part-timers.

Susan J. Lambert, an expert on part-time work and a professor of organizational theory at the University of Chicago, said the use of part-timers had also escalated because of the declining power of labor unions. "They set a standard for what a real job was — Monday through Friday with full-time hours," she said. "We've moved away from that."

Many corporations place store or restaurant managers under strict limits about what their payroll or employee hours can be each week, usually based on a formula tied to sales. These formulas usually give managers little flexibility to increase the hours assigned.

David Henson, a former assistant manager at a Walmart in Thief River Falls, Minn., said part-timers would sometimes come into his office on the brink of tears.

"A lot of them were single mothers. They said they weren't earning enough to support their families," he said. "They desperately wanted more hours, but we weren't able to give them."

Some, Mr. Henson said, were eager to take second jobs. But if they said they were unavailable during certain hours, then the managers and scheduling software would reduce their hours further, he said. Many workers concluded that it was simply not worth it.

David Tovar, a Walmart spokesman, said that less than half of Walmart's hourly employees were part-time and that the company provided better wages and benefits than many competitors. But he acknowledged that part-time employees with less availability were typically assigned fewer hours.

Katherine Lugar, executive vice president of the Retail Industry Leaders Association, said that the industry's scheduling practices worked well, and that retailers did their best to accommodate employee needs. "Happy employees provide better service," she said.

She noted that millions of Americans preferred part-time work. "Many individuals come to retail because it is flexible, like the working mom who wants to work when kids are in school, or the graduate student," she said.

### When the Hours Fade

The day after Desmond Anthony graduated from Western Carolina University, he moved to Manhattan with the dream of becoming a Broadway actor and singer.

He knew he had to support himself with something else, and by Week 2, he had applied for 20 retail jobs, including one at the sprawling Express store in Herald Square, an emporium of slim jeans, sequined T-shirts and booming music.

"When I first walked into Express, I said, 'Oh my God, this place is awesome and there's music and it looks like a happening place,'" Mr. Anthony said.

Express offered him a job the next day. Mr. Anthony, 6-foot-4 and with a booming voice and big smile, said that after receiving just four hours of training, he began alternating as a greeter, cashier and sales floor assistant.

At first, he usually worked five days a week, often racking up 30 hours. But after several months, he said, he and many co-workers had their weekly hours cut to 12 or 15 and occasionally none at all.

"I'd go to the managers and say, 'What is the issue? Am I not pulling my weight?'" he said. "And they'd say, 'We just don't have enough money.'"

"So how am I supposed to support myself?" I asked, and they said that was not their problem."

Mr. Anthony said it was hard to survive. At \$8.25 an hour, 15 hours a week equaled about \$500 a month. His share of the monthly rent was \$800, with several hundred more for utilities, phone and subway fares. Some days he went hungry, he acknowledged, and he repeatedly turned to his parents for help.

He and his co-workers held out hope that, come the holiday season, their hours would pick up. "But then they hired 15 more workers," he said.

The store's schedule for each coming week, he said, was supposed to be posted on Wednesdays, but often didn't go up until Friday or Saturday. With so little notice, he sometimes had to scrap plans for auditions.

At one point, he said, his weekly schedule dwindled to two assigned days and two or three days when he was supposed to call the store in the morning to see whether managers wanted him to come in that day.

Mr. Anthony quit last February, upset that Express had given him an annual raise of just 25 cents an hour. He now works at a Zara apparel store on Fifth Avenue, which, he said, gives him 30 hours a week and does more to accommodate his scheduling needs.

Express says that about 85 percent of its employees are part-time. "It's really more for flexibility than for anything else," said Michael Keane, the company's executive vice president for human resources. "It helps our ability to match associate staffing to traffic levels."

Mr. Keane said many young people were eager to work part-time there, attracted by a hip atmosphere and the clothing discounts for employees.

With regard to Mr. Anthony's complaints, Barbara Coleman, an Express spokeswoman, said stores aimed to post worker schedules a week or two in advance. "An associate will be notified in advance if they are scheduled for a call-in shift," she said.

As for the hiring surge that upset Mr. Anthony, Ms. Coleman said, as the holidays approach, Express typically increases its part-time work force by nearly 20 percent to accommodate extended hours and the rush of shoppers.

In New York's fiercely competitive retail world, Mr. Anthony's experience is not unusual. Workers at Abercrombie & Fitch, Nine West and Bed Bath & Beyond told similar stories.

A 2011 survey of 436 employees at retailers in New York City, as diverse as luxury establishments on Fifth Avenue and dollar stores in the Bronx, found that half of the city's retail workers were part-time and only one in 10 part-time workers had a set schedule week to week. One-fifth said they always or often had to be available for call-in shifts, according to the survey, which was overseen by researchers at City University of New York.

"We're seeing more and more that the burden of market fluctuations is being shifted onto the workers, as opposed to the companies absorbing it themselves," said Carrie Gleason, executive director of the Retail Action Project, an advocate for retail workers that helped conduct the survey and is financed by foundations and the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union.

That union wants more labor deals like the one it has at Macy's flagship store in Herald Square in Manhattan. Although that store has many part-timers, the more senior workers can reserve days off and learn their schedule six months in advance.

Mr. Flickinger, the retail consultant, said companies benefited from using many part-timers. "It's almost like sharecropping — if you have a lot of farmers with small plots of land, they work very hard to produce in that limited amount of land," he said. "Many part-time workers feel a real competition to work hard during their limited hours because they want to impress managers to give them more hours."

Ms. Rosser, the Jamba Juice district manager, amplified on the advantages.

"You don't want to work your team members for eight-hour shifts," she said. "By the time they get to the second half of their shift, they don't have the same energy and enthusiasm. We like to schedule people around four- to five-hour shifts so you can get the best out of them during that time."

#### Comments from Workers Who Are Not as Dumb as Companies Think

from CSB (California):

Wow, this is a heartbreaking article. It's a wonder that this topic about our modern form of destructive capitalism is not even breaking into our social conversation or the elections. Only the "fringe" have been highly voluble about this negative business trend. Our collective fear has cocooned the dialogue. All we get are mainstream platitudes that the companies are also struggling. Rather hard to believe when many industries are still raking in profits, and continue to target unrealistic numbers of overvaluation. It's clear that the treatment of workers has to be on the global agenda, as countries everywhere are experiencing this mistreatment of workers. We've returned to the days of robber barons and indentured servitude.

FoxConn, Walmart, Amsplat, and many other companies that are facing worker strikes are fast becoming the norm in the business world, where workers have been relegated to the resource column of the balance sheet with little interest for protecting them as the valuable assets they really are. Until our political dialogue acknowledges this fact, any chance of real democracy is but a pipe dream. Corporations applying tunnel-visioned price tags onto everything in this world has had a disastrous effect on our collective way of life.

from M (New York):

This is extremely sad. However, I think that all of us who read this are part of the problem. How many of us are so eager for a deal, that we'll gladly go online and save \$1 instead of supporting our local workers?

from Cathleen (Massachusetts):

My daughter worked for Coldstone Creamery ice cream store and jumped through hoops to keep herself on the schedule. She went to work one day to find out they had called her, while she was en route to her shift, to cancel her. They sent her home. No reimbursement for her time and travel expense and no sentiment to her feelings of being nothing more than a number. They use that computer system that generates how many workers to staff the store.

My daughter was a smart, reliable and hard worker just getting into the workforce at 17 yrs. old. I was dumbfounded when I learned of these tactics that are "legal game" for businesses in Massachusetts. I certainly could not relay to her how when you are a good, honest worker a company will acknowledge that and keep you with them like the same kind of loyalty that I had growing up.

What exactly are we supposed to tell our children to expect and what should they aspire to be like in this workforce we have now? I, for one, am not so sure anymore.

from Bill Harding (Hudson, Michigan)

I am 72 and have rarely been out of work. Am still working PT. Done everything from aircraft mechanic to rough-neck to gold mining. Now I work at an auto auction. What I don't understand is why PTers are treated any differently than FTers. We do the same work, we just don't get as many hours; and that is not our fault.

To me, it is a form of slavery. The company controls how many hours I can work, which effectively controls how much money I can make, which effectively controls the rest of my life. People should get paid for what they do, not for how long the company allows you to do it. If I, or someone like me didn't do what I do, the company would not be in business. So, my job is just as important as the manager's job. People should be getting paid for the value of their contribution to the success of the business, not by the quantity of that contribution, which is not in their control.

But greed is a powerful influence and this "person", the corporation, has no soul and therefore no morals. So, until we can put the corporation back into its place and strip it of its "person" status, things will not change. And as long as the accumulation of "things" and "power" is the main goal in life, those who run corporations will not change.





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Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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