



# LAW ENFORCEMENT AGAINST PROHIBITION

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February 29, 2012

Statement of

**Denver Police Lieutenant (Ret.) Tony Ryan**

**On behalf of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition**

in support of SB12-020 -- Immunity For Reporters Of Overdoses

Thank you for the opportunity to present the views of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP) in support of SB12-020 protecting people who report an emergency drug or alcohol overdose from drug-or-alcohol related arrests.

LEAP is an association of current and former law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges and criminal justice professionals at every level of government who are speaking out about the failure of our drug policies, supported by over 50,000 civilian members. I am a board member of LEAP.

Like other law enforcement organizations, LEAP does not endorse or condone drug use. What we advocate for are smarter, safer drug laws.

I served as a Denver police officer for 36 years. I received numerous awards from the Denver Police Department, including the Medal of Honor, the Purple Heart, the Merit Award, and the Community Service Award. I was also named Footprinters Officer of the Year and received a Life Saving Award from the Denver Fire Department for using CPR to stabilize an ailing man until an ambulance arrived. I never lost sight that my primary purpose was to save lives and keep people safe, and that's why I'm submitting this statement.

Because of the drug laws currently in place, witnesses are afraid to call 911. Overdose death are often preventable; most overdose deaths do not occur until 1 to 3 hours after the initial injection or ingestion of drugs. And yet, the majority of witnesses to drug related overdoses do not call 911 for help. The most common reason that people cite for not calling 911 for help when they witness an overdose is fear of police involvement.

I understand the mistaken but positive intentions that motivate those who may favor tough sentences for all drug offenses. No one wants to encourage drug abuse. But during my years in law enforcement I witnessed many unintended consequences of drug prohibition, most notably, the fact that we have put bloodthirsty, profit-driven criminals in charge of the illegal drug market. These are ineffective laws that lead to ruined lives and violence against police officers. The simplest first step we can take is to refrain from arresting people for small amounts of alcohol or drugs when doing so would save a life.

**These deaths are preventable.** I urge you to pass SB12-020. Thank you for your consideration.