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This is a classic example of the “law of unintended consequences.” Setting aside the issue of whether California’s legalization of marijuana was a good idea, it is now clear that as local government seeks to regulate and charge fees for growing the drug, it has tipped the enormous pot industry’s economics in favor of the black market. South-of-the-border cartels have no constraints on what they charge, and they can now provide pot more cheaply than legal providers. Border control agencies report larger than usual drug shipments into the US, making anti-criminal enforcement more difficult for both Mexico and the US. We have a terrible drug crisis in the US, and helping the cartels succeed makes no sense.

Another important issue is that Contra Costa County, facing over \$1 billion in unfunded pension obligations, is struggling to find new revenues to help offset the impact of rapidly rising pension and health care payments. Like the other public agencies in the county that offer defined benefit plans, that massive debt is behind many ballot measures now and in the future.

The final issue is that the legalization of marijuana in California puts us at odds with the federal government, which could at any moment move to more aggressively enforce anti-marijuana laws. We don’t need another looming conflict between federal and state or local laws; that just saps resources better spent on critical issues here at home.