A majority of New Jersey residents now supports the elimination of penalties for the possession of marijuana, according to the latest Eagleton Poll. The results of this statewide survey, conducted in mid-April, show that 54 percent of adult New Jerseyans agree that "penalties for the possession of a small amount of marijuana should be eliminated," while 42 percent are opposed, and 4 percent undecided.

Poll results over the past five years have shown a steady trend toward increased public support for less strict marijuana laws. Three years ago, results to the same question showed elimination of penalties for possession of a small amount opposed by a 46 percent to 51 percent margin. Five years ago in 1972, the margin was 34 percent in favor of to 56 percent opposed.

However, Poll results also indicate that public support for decriminalization for possession of a small amount does not mean people favor complete legalization. Only 29 percent of all New Jerseyans agree that "the sale and use of marijuana should be completely legalized," while 66 percent are opposed to legalization, and 5 percent undecided. Support for complete legalization is up slightly from 1974 when the margin opposed to it was 23 percent to 73 percent.

Not surprisingly, there is a large "generation gap" in attitudes toward decriminalization. Among 18-29 year olds, nearly three out of four -- 74 percent -- support the elimination of penalties for the possession of marijuana. Among 30-49 year olds,
53 percent support decriminalization. But among New Jerseyans over 50, only 41 percent support the elimination of penalties for the use of marijuana.

In addition to the young, support for decriminalization is strongest among liberals, the college educated, and wealthier respondents. Opposition to decriminalization comes primarily from Republicans, conservatives, those with less than a high school education, and older people.

Poll analyst Scott Taylor pointed out that "support for less restrictive marijuana laws has always been stronger among younger people than older people, and as today's youth, along with the young people of the 1960's and '70's, come to make up a larger part of the population, their views on marijuana will become increasingly important."

He added that poll results "show a softening of negative attitudes toward decriminalization among nearly all groups in the state. Many are still opposed, but the extent of their opposition seems to be ebbing year after year."

The Eagleton Poll is conducted regularly throughout the year by the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. The latest statewide Poll was conducted between April 11 and 19, when a scientifically selected random sample of 1005 adults, 18 years and older were interviewed by telephone.

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NOTE TO REPORTERS: THIS IS PART ONE OF A TWO-PART RELEASE. PART TWO WILL EXAMINE THE LEVEL OF USAGE OF MARIJUANA IN NEW JERSEY ALONG WITH THE IMPLICATIONS OF LEGALIZATION.
BACKGROUND MEMO--RELEASE #25-5, SUNDAY, MAY 15, 1977

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

"A topic that has been under discussion in New Jersey concerns the legalization of marijuana. I am going to read you a number of statements about this issue. For each one, could you tell me if you agree or disagree."

"The sale and use of marijuana should be completely legalized."

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<th>All respondents, April 1977</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
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<td>29%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>All respondents, November 1974</td>
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<td>All respondents, May 1972</td>
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"Penalties for the possession of a small amount of marijuana should be eliminated."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All respondents, April 1977</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>All respondents, November 1974</td>
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<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>All respondents, May 1972</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>56</td>
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Democrat
Independent
Republican
Liberal
Conservative
Less than high school
High school graduate
More than high school
18-29 years old
30-49
over 50
White
Black
Under $10,000
$10,000-$15,000
$15,000-$20,000
Over $20,000