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DCMJ Applauds President Biden For Negotiating the Release of Brittney Griner and Calls on President Biden to Free the 2,800 Federal Cannabis Prisoners Before Christmas

WASHINGTON, DC – DC Marijuana Justice, Maryland Marijuana Justice, Virginia Marijuana Justice, and New York Marijuana Justice (DCMJ, MDMJ, VAMJ, NYMJ, collectively known as “the MJs”) are pleased to hear that WNBA basketball player Brittney Griner has been released from Russian prison. After having been tried and convicted of possessing a small amount of cannabis oil at a Russian airport earlier this year, she was released in exchange for convicted arms dealer Viktor Bout. We are happy that she is on her way back to the United States in time for Christmas, but call upon President Biden to release all domestic cannabis prisoners before Christmas.

“Brittney Griner was unjustly imprisoned, a pawn used by Russia’s Putin, so it is remarkable the President slammed-dunked, gaining her freedom by releasing one of the worst people on earth who had zero moral equivalency to Griner and her ‘crime.’ With President Biden on the path to cannabis legalization, he can now show the same enthusiasm for freedom for thousands of Americans in federal prisons for cannabis offenses,” says Adam Eiding, co-founder of DCMJ, and organizer of the “Free Brittney” demonstration outside of the Russian Embassy in Washington, DC on Thursday, Oct. 26, 2022. Eiding asks, “Why is releasing Russian arms dealers morally OK when we won’t release American cannabis farmers in federal prison?”

“The weapons that Viktor Bout sold invariably led to hundreds if not thousands of deaths, the same can’t be said for the federal cannabis prisoners who got locked up for growing cannabis plants in the US,” says Kris Furnish, co-founder of MDMJ, which recently helped pass Question 4, which will legalize cannabis cultivation and possession in Maryland. “The United States government is showing that one cannabis prisoner in Russia is more important than thousands of American cannabis prisoners,” concludes Furnish.

By most estimates there are about 2,800 federal cannabis prisoners who were not pardoned in October because they were convicted of charges more serious than simple possession. In some states cannabis oil is legally treated as hash oil and has stiffer penalties than simple possession of unprocessed cannabis.

“The Griner family will get a special present this year, but so many families won’t receive the gift of presence,” says Rachel Ramone Donlan, co-founder of VAMJ. “There are thousands of families across the United States who wish they were as lucky as Brittney, and President Biden has the power to bring all of the cannabis prisoners home for Christmas.”

ABOUT DC MARIJUANA JUSTICE *Since its founding in 2013, DCMJ has led the nation in creative and high-profile cannabis reform activism. After introducing and passing DC's Initiative 71 in 2014, which voters legalized the possession and cultivation of cannabis, DCMJ organized three large seed giveaways that provided all adults and Congressional staffers the means to grow cannabis for themselves, deployed giant 51-foot inflatable joints outside the Capitol, the White House, the 2016 Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, Times Square in New York City, the 2016 Presidential Debates, Annapolis Statehouse and Boston's Freedom Rally, as well as distributing over 10,000 joints of District of Columbia homegrown cannabis at the Inauguration of President Donald Trump, and attempting to distribute 1,227 joints at the congressional "Joint Session" in 2017, where U.S. Capitol Police unlawfully arrested seven DCMJ activists (All charges were dropped the following day). DCMJ will distribute more than 4,200 joints at vaccination sites across the District of Columbia on April 20, 2021 in conjunction with its upcoming "Joints For Jabs" cannabis giveaway. In 2018, 2019, and 2021, aligned organizations MDMJ, VAMJ, COMJ, and NYMJ were formed to advocate for cannabis reform in Maryland, Virginia, Colorado, and New York. In 2021, DCMJ conceptualized and launched the "Joints for Jabs" coronavirus vaccination incentive program that was spontaneously adopted around the U.S., including by the State of Washington. DCMJ demands cannabis be removed from the Controlled Substances Act and all Americans are given the right to grow cannabis in the safety and privacy of their homes.*

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