

2018 Midterms: Science Won and Lost at the Ballot Box



By Alex Berezow, PhD — November 8, 2018



Credit: Storyblocks [1]

Not only did Americans vote on members of Congress this week, but citizens of several states also voted on various science- and health-related policy issues. How did those turn out?

It was a mixed bag. In some states, sensible science policy carried the day, while in others, head-scratching new laws were passed. First, the good:

Colorado Proposition 112 was defeated. In the Centennial State, environmental activists tried to push through Proposition 112, which would have greatly curtailed fracking in the state. Based on rather flimsy evidence, its proponents wanted to expand the size of "buffer zones," inside of which fracking would not be allowed. The initiative was so poorly written and so transparently anti-fracking that it garnered [bipartisan opposition](#) [2]. Thankfully, the voters of Colorado didn't fall for it, and the [initiative failed 57% to 43%](#) [3].

Now, the bad:

Utah and Missouri approve medical marijuana. I don't care if people want to blaze up a doobie. That's their decision as adults. But let's stop pretending that there is anything medical about marijuana. It's basically a cigarette that gets you high. If there are any health benefits to smoking marijuana, they are far, far outweighed by the [side effects](#) [4], including lung damage, cognitive impairment, dependence, and psychosis. Pot does not deserve a health halo.

Florida bans workplace vaping... and offshore drilling. This is weird. Floridians were presented with a [single initiative that banned both vaping and offshore drilling](#) [5]. Why those were combined into a single vote is something that only [Florida Man](#) [6] could answer. Anyway, banning workplace

vaping makes very little sense. [Vaping is 95% safer than smoking cigarettes](#) [7], so preventing a vaper (who may be trying to quit smoking) from getting his nicotine fix in a safer way seems counterproductive for public health. Yet, there is a growing (and strangely [partisan](#) [8]) [war on the vaping industry](#) [9].

On to 2020!

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[1] <https://www.storyblocks.com/stock-image/vote-button-showing-options-voting-or-choice-spnxlqyrxdzj6gn4tcj>

[2] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/11/01/colorado-proposition-112-anti-fracking-law-gets-bipartisan-opposition-13564>

[3] <https://elections.denverpost.com/results/county-break-down/?Prop-112/7618>

[4] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/04/20/celebrate-420-day-pondering-harmful-effects-cannabis-12865>

[5] <http://time.com/5447600/florida-amendment-9-offshore-drilling-vaping/>

[6] <https://www.reddit.com/r/FloridaMan/>

[7] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/08/29/e-cigarettes-cdc-should-learn-uks-nhs-11761>

[8] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/05/17/juul-and-vaping-public-health-becomes-partisan-issue-12981>

[9] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/03/21/anti-smoking-bigots-trying-kill-smokers-and-vaping-industry-12733>