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Editor  
The Detroit Free Press  
600 W. Fort  
Detroit, MI 48226

Dear Editor:

Several recent columns and articles have been painting a scary picture of the Michigan budget, with a deficit brewing in the neighborhood of \$1.6 billion. But your five-year old child can solve the problem in a heartbeat.

Consider:

In December 2008, Jeffrey A. Miron, professor of economics at Harvard, released a paper, [\*The Budgetary Implications of Drug Prohibition\*](#), in which he documents the estimated savings to state and local governments from ending drug prohibition. These cumulative savings—from reducing expenditures on law enforcement and prisons to increasing revenue from taxing of legally produced and available drugs—across all 50 states are conservatively estimated at \$63 billion.

Michigan—with its harsh laws, draconian sentencing practices, and endemic hostility to free enterprise—no doubt is one of the higher-cost regions. But assuming merely an average benefit, Michigan gains \$1.26 billion immediately by simple legislative action; no doubt the positive impact from *de*prohibition to business and agriculture is equivalent. Further, legalizing agricultural hemp—the native strain of cannabis that has no psychoactive qualities—would unleash a considerable annual income to tens of thousands of merchants and farmers.

Do we want more nonviolent prisoners or more-productive teachers? Ask your five-year-old.

Sincerely,

Brian Wright  
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