Call for Papers: The Controlled Substances Act at 50 Years - Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ

Roughly a century ago, in response to growing concerns about drug use, the federal government enacted its first drug control law in the Harrison Narcotics Act of 1914. Subsequent decades saw Congress continue to pass drug control legislation and criminalize drug abuse, but by the 1960s there was growing interest in more medical approaches to preventing and responding to drug abuse. Upon his election, President Richard Nixon prioritized the reduction of drug use: in rhetoric, he spoke of a so-called “war on drugs”; in policy, he pushed for a new comprehensive federal drug law in the form of The Controlled Substances Act (CSA), enacted as Title II of the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970.

The CSA emerged from a widespread, bipartisan view that comprehensive legislation was needed to clarify federal drug laws, and its centerpiece was a comprehensive scheduling system for assessing and regulating drugs in five schedules defined in terms of substances’ potential for abuse and dependence, and possible medical use and safety. In design, the CSA was intended to prioritize a scientific approach to drug prohibition and regulation by embracing a mixed law-enforcement and public-health approach to drug policy. But in practice, the US Justice Department came to have an outsized role in drug control policy, especially as subsequent “tough-on-crime” sentencing laws made the CSA the backbone of a federal drug war in which punitive approaches to evolving drug problems consistently eclipsed public health responses.

Although the federal drug war has been controversial since its inception, the CSA’s statutory framework defining how the federal government regulates the production, possession, and distribution of controlled substances has endured. As we mark a half-century of drug policy under the CSA, the Academy for Justice at the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law and the Drug Enforcement & Policy Center at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law are together sponsoring a conference to look back on how the CSA has helped shape modern American drug laws and policies and to look forward toward the direction these laws could and should take in the next 50 years.

The conference, "The Controlled Substances Act at 50 Years," will take place on February 20-22, 2020, at Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law in Phoenix, Arizona. As part of this conference we are soliciting papers for the February 22 scholarship workshop. Junior scholars are encouraged to submit, and will be paired with a senior scholar to review and discuss the paper.

Each paper should reflect on the past, present or future of the Controlled Substances Act and drug policy in the United States. Participants should have a draft to discuss and circulate by February 10. The papers will be gathered and published in a symposium edition of the Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law, a peer-reviewed publication. Participants should have a
completed version to begin the publication process by March 15. Final papers may range in length from 5,000 words to 20,000 words.

Deadline: Please submit a title and an abstract of no more than 300 words, to Suzanne.Stewart.1@asu.edu by August 15, 2019. Accepted scholars will be notified by September 15, 2019.