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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 28, 2006
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GAO: Government Anti-Drug Ads Don't Work

Congressional Auditors Say Budget Should be Slashed

WASHINGTON, DC – The Government Accountability Office (GAO) ruled on Friday that the White House's \$1.2 billion anti-drug ad campaign is not only ineffective, but encourages some teens to try drugs. The GAO, Congress's auditing arm, recommended that funding for the ads be cut despite President Bush's request for another \$120 million to produce more ads next year.

"Young people see right through the government's offensive propaganda campaign," said Kris Krane, executive director of Students for Sensible Drug Policy. "We hate being lied to, and these ads clearly stretch the truth. It's no wonder the government's efforts have a boomerang effect."

Some of the popular ads, produced by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), claim that using marijuana supports terrorism, causes people to shoot their friends in the face, run over little girls on bikes, and become pregnant.

The GAO, in examining the methodology of a federally-funded long-term evaluation of the ads, found "no evidence of a positive outcome" and "significant unfavorable effects," including that "greater exposure to the campaign was associated with weaker anti-drug norms and increases in the perceptions that others use marijuana."

The ads have also been criticized as ineffective and counterproductive by the White House Office of Management and Budget, the Republican Study Committee, Taxpayers for Common Sense, the National Taxpayers Union, and Citizens Against Government Waste, among others.

After the federally-funded study repeatedly showed unfavorable results, ONDCP cut funding for the evaluation and prevented pending reports from being released.

SSDP hosts an online action system where citizens can ask Congress to cut funding for the ads. The group recently ran a parody of an ONDCP ad in a popular music magazine, highlighting the ineffectiveness of the government campaign. See <http://www.ssdp.org/ads> for more information.

The GAO report can be viewed at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06818.pdf>

Students for Sensible Drug Policy, a national organization with college and high school chapters, is committed to providing education on harms caused by the War on Drugs, working to involve youth in the political process, and promoting an open, honest, and rational discussion of alternative solutions to our nation's drug problems.

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