

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 11, 2021

The Honorable Merrick B. Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland,

As members of the California congressional delegation, we write to you due to an alarming escalation in criminal activity across our state related to illegal marijuana grow operations. The issue has become untenable for residents living in affected areas and we hope that as you begin your tenure as the chief law enforcement official in the United States, you will take the necessary steps to protect the people of our great state.

The situation with illegal marijuana grows has become dangerous for the residents in the surrounding neighborhoods. We have heard from our constituents of heinous incidents of intimidation, coercion, and violence being used by illegal growers to ensure that their operations continue unimpeded. There have also been multiple homicides at these grow sites as opposing criminal syndicates engage in turf wars. In 2019, an El Dorado County Deputy Sheriff was wantonly killed when responding to a theft at an illegal marijuana grow. In 2020, seven bodies were discovered at one time at an illegal grow in Riverside County. And most recently, two bodies were discovered at another site. These are only a few of the known instances of homicide at these grows.

Many of the criminals running and working these grow operations are illegal aliens who have either entered the country illegally or have overstayed visas. Additionally, many of the individuals arrested at these marijuana grows have been discovered to be victims of human trafficking, forced into servitude at these grow sites.

In addition to menacing our constituents, these criminals are damaging our public lands and water resources. On multiple occasions, illegal grows have been discovered stealing water from the communities they inhabit. It's estimated that at the end of 2020, illegal marijuana grows were illegally consuming between 3 and 9.5 million gallons of water daily. Water is already a precious resource in California; we cannot allow these illegal operations to exacerbate the problem further.

This problem is not going away, and it will only get worse without direct intervention. In 2020, illegal grow operations increased in Southern California by as much as 300% in some areas. The growth is fueled in part by the knowledge that criminals who are arrested will ultimately face no

consequences. We have heard from local, state, and federal law enforcement who are frustrated that their hard work is routinely rendered pointless by prosecutors who refuse to charge offenders unless they commit additional, "more serious" crimes as well. When prosecutors wait for violent or other serious crimes to occur before charging these criminals, our constituents pay the price.

We request that you utilize whatever authority is available to you to address this growing crisis in our communities, including prosecuting these criminals to the fullest extent allowable under the law to cut off the escalating fear and violence in our districts. Decisive action is needed now. Every day that these criminals continue to operate with impunity hurts our constituents and California as a whole.

We appreciate your attention to this critical matter. We look forward to working with you to address the issue.

Sincerely,



MIKE GARCIA
Member of Congress



KEVIN MCCARTHY
House Republican Leader



JAY OBERNOLTE
Member of Congress



KEN CALVERT
Member of Congress



DEVIN NUNES
Member of Congress



TOM MCCLINTOCK
Member of Congress



DOUG LAMALFA
Member of Congress



DARRELL ISSA
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YOUNG KIM
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DAVID G. VALADAO
Member of Congress



MICHELLE STEEL
Member of Congress