Abstract

In Oregon a ballot measure to legalize marijuana failed on November 6, 2012. In Colorado marijuana was legalized for recreational use that same day. In the political hockey game of marijuana legalization journalists serve as something of a referee. Just as different referees can interpret the rulebook different ways, different news outlets often frame a public policy issue different ways.

Frames are necessary to tell stories effectively and help viewers give meaning to an event or a series of events. To tell a story without a frame suggests the possibility of a single universal truth about a series of events and description of a place, which any idealist would immediately dismiss.

This study was a frame analysis of 75 television news stories from nine stations in Colorado, eleven stations in Oregon in addition to CNN.