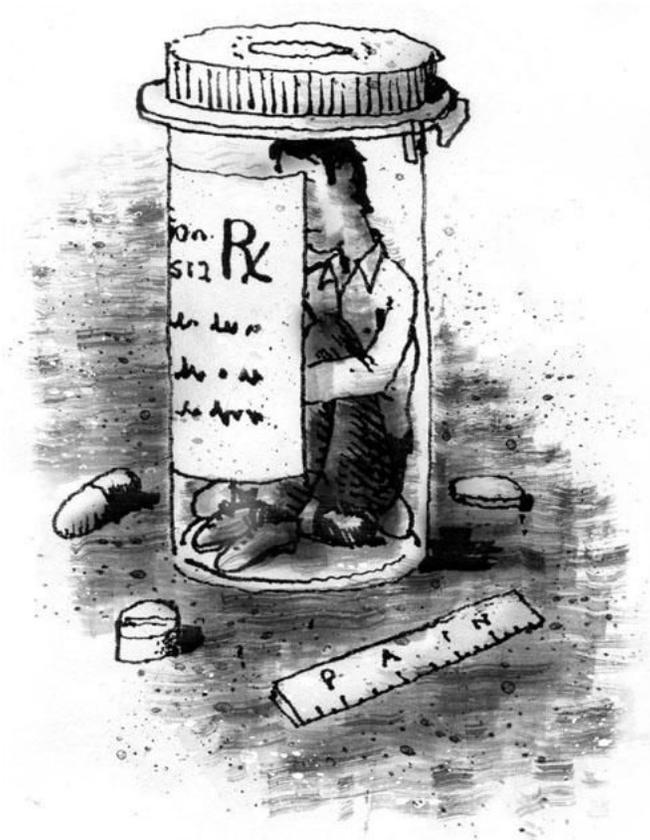


SUBSTANCE ABUSE  
ON THE LOOSE



AMERICAN'S SILENT  
KILLER

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## Overview

### A History of Substance Abuse in America

From the initial introduction of drugs and alcohol to America, there has been reported substance abuse amongst individuals who choose to consume these substances in large quantities. Substance abuse began even before the United States had become a country, and remains a prominent societal issue in the 21st century.

During the 17th century, American settlers were introduced to tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana upon settling in the New World. Settlers quickly learned how to mass produce drugs like tobacco to benefit them economically. During this period of time, a Triangular Trade exchange system was implemented between America, Europe, and Africa. Because of this system, the American region became quickly involved with trading these sorts of products. This effectively introduced an abundance of drug and alcohol items to the entire world, which impacted many people.

Through consumption of these substances, abuse was an inevitable outcome for individuals who chose to consume alcohol and drugs in unhealthy quantities. Alcoholism had become an issue in the United States. Through much debate, alcohol was set to be eradicated through prohibition, or the 18th amendment. The ratification of this amendment, in 1920, aimed to reduce crime, corruption, solve social problems, reduce the tax burden created by prisons and poorhouses, and improve health and hygiene in America. However, by 1933, prohibition was lifted and the manufacture, sale, and transportation of intoxicating liquors was no longer banned. Failure of prohibition proved that the consumption of alcohol was not only a rising problem but had also become a permanent practice in the United States.



Alongside alcohol, drug abuse became distinguished as an emerging issue in society. Unknowing of the dire effects of opium, common household medicines were laced with this highly addictive chemical, such as “Mrs. Winslow’s Soothing Syrup”—commercially produced in 1849. According to the New York Times’ article, “A Long History With Drugs and Alcohol,” a huge population of the United States was addicted to opium, morphine and other drugs without realizing it.

Drug use was not exclusive to highly addictive medications. Recreational use of drugs also emerged as it gained popularity in the 1960s and 1970s. Drugs such as marijuana, heroin, LSD, and opioids were in heavy rotation amongst Americans.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, more than 130 people in the United States overdose on opioids every day, indicating that we are still currently in what has been declared as an opioid overdose crisis.

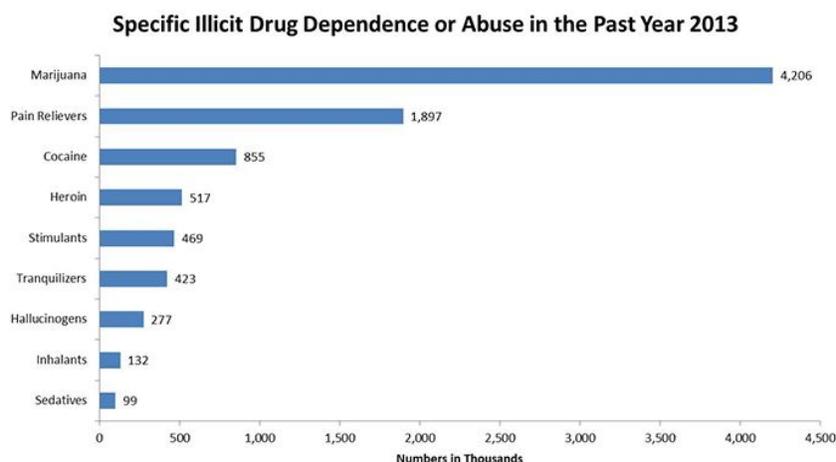
## Legal and Illegal Substance Abuse

Through analyzing the history of substance abuse in the United States, we can determine that legal and illegal substances have both contributed towards the nationwide epidemic.

Legal substances are allowed to be consumed as long as age limitations are met and prescription rules are followed. Legal substances that are often abused are alcohol, opioids (painkillers), nicotine, prescription drugs, etc. These substances are misused when users do not abide by the correct dosage or are taking these substances without being medically prescribed. According to data collected by the United Nations, the United States is the world's largest prescriber of opioids. Americans have most recently recognized the consequences of over-prescribing medicine that is aimed at suppressing pain. In 2017, more than 47,000 Americans died as a result of an opioid overdose. Abuse of legal drugs, such as painkillers, has contributed towards the introduction of illicit drugs in society, as individuals find dependency on substances that alter their mood and mind.

Illegal substances have limitations on their ownership or use. Such substances include cannabis (legality depends on state of residency), hallucinogens, heroin, cocaine, etc. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, in 2013, an estimated 24.6 million Americans aged 12 or older had used an illicit drug in the past month. This number has increased 8.3% since 2002.

As substance use and abuse is increasing, the negative health effects of legal and illegal substance abuse are synonymous. The National Institute on Drug Abuse states, short-term effects of various forms of drug abuse include, changes in appetite, mood, blood pressure, susceptibility of heart attacks, and possibility of a stroke. Long-term effects can include heart or lung disease, cancer, mental illness, HIV/AIDS,



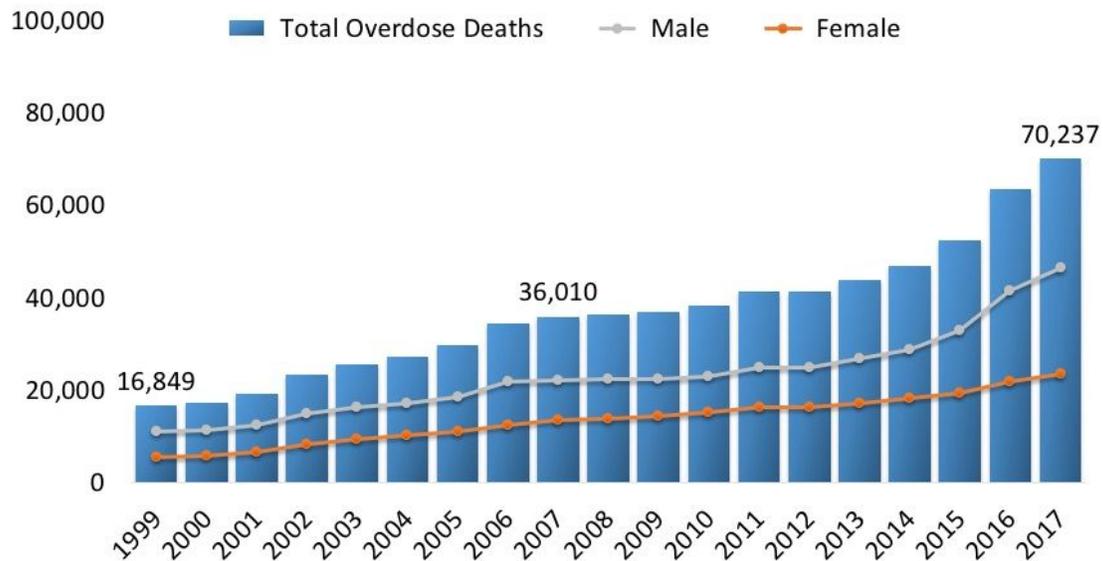
hepatitis, brain damage, overdose, and death. As for legal issues regarding possession of illegal drugs, one can be sentenced to jail depending on the quantity of drugs in possession and/or must pay fines.

### Substance Abuse Today

Substance abuse has become a persistent issue within society in the United States. The National Institute of Drug Abuse reported that 70,237 individuals died from overdose in 2017 alone.

In young adults aged 15-24, who most would consider as still children, drugs and alcohol comprise 15% of deaths. According to Talbott Recovery, more than 65 million Americans report binge drinking in the past month and 24.6 million Americans report using some kind of illicit drug in the past month. Substance abuse has proven to be a silent killer amongst society, capable of the destruction of tens of thousands of lives each year.

We must break its silence.



Source: : Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Multiple Cause of Death 1999-2017 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released December, 2018

Figure 1. **National Drug Overdose Deaths, Number Among All Ages, by Gender, 1999-2017**

## A Framework for Our Deliberation

Three approaches have been created to address and improve substance abuse in the United States. Our goal is to discuss various solutions to this issue in an attempt to have a shared understanding about it.

### Approach 1: Treatment

- Proposes that a treatment approach should be taken through lessening punishment of substance abusers, and instead giving them more treatment and intervention options in an attempt to save their lives.

### Approach 2: Prevention

- Proposes that a preventative approach should be taken through school systems where children are most at risk, along with limiting media and advertisements that falsely portray substances in a positive light.

### Approach 3: Legalization and Decriminalization

- Proposes that a legal approach should be taken through changing laws regarding substance abuse, such as lowering age requirements to curb illegal drinking, placing stricter laws on drug importations in the medical field, as well as legalizing medical and recreational substances.

Through the form of a structured conversation, our team will address each approach and weigh the benefits and drawbacks. The three approaches are aimed to improve the lives of those affected by substance abuse through the introduction of various treatments, policies, and regulations. We would like to emphasize that this is not a debate. There will be no winners or losers. We hope to cultivate a discussion that will help enhance the way we think about each approach and broaden our perspective on the issue of substance abuse. We're also going to practice considering others' values, and how individual ideals influence perception while we work through any emotional disparities that may reveal itself. Even if we come to a decision at the completion of our deliberation, we must be aware that there are other perspectives of people who are not present at this deliberation, who may want to voice a different opinion.



## Approach 1: Treatment



It's been reported by PrisonerHealth.org that in a study of five major cities in the United States, 63-83% of arrestees had drugs in their system during the time of their arrest, and only 11% of those who have been incarcerated and have addictions are properly treated. This means that 88% of inmates who have an addiction to substances are left completely untreated and will have much higher chances of relapsing after their sentence. Furthermore, it is proven that two weeks following an inmate's release is their most *vulnerable* time for relapse. These two weeks are associated with a substantial increase in mortality rates due to substance abuse. When people with substance addictions are purely incarcerated with no treatment or help, it is not common for them to actively seek treatment once they are released. This treatment approach focuses on alternatives to incarcerating substance abusers, and highlights the benefits and potential drawbacks of some intervention programs.

### Potential Changes

#### ■ Creates Supervised Consumption Sites (or Safe Injection Sites)

⇒ Supervised Consumption Sites (SCS) are provided in legally sanctioned facilities that allow people to consume pre-obtained drugs under the supervision of trained staff and are designed to reduce the health and public order issues associated with public drug consumption.

#### ■ Promotes rehabilitation over incarceration

⇒ Rehabilitation is a course of treatment for drug or alcohol dependence, typically at a residential facility and the different types of rehabilitation services include but are not limited to: long term residential treatment, short term residential treatment, outpatient treatment programs, Individual drug counseling, group counseling, and treating criminal justice-involved drug abusers and addicted individuals.

⇒ SCS are currently present in 12 different countries around. The most popular one is in Vancouver, Canada which has been operating for 15 years.

⇒ A study about this site shows that the staff has supervised over 3.6 million injections and responded to over 6000 overdoses. They also found no signs of the “honey pot effect” meaning they saw no signs of encouraged drug use or an increase in drug use (Gordon).

⇒ There have been no overdose deaths in a SCS.

⇒ 11% of people who have been incarcerated and have addictions get treatment for their addictions. The rest are simply incarcerated with the hope that their addictions fade away as the time ticks by on their sentences. (DrugAbuse.gov)

### ■ Treats mental illnesses

⇒ These disorders are more often seen alongside substance abuse, and could be treated if we take this approach:

- I. Bipolar disorder, depression, social anxiety, PTSD, panic disorder, and schizophrenia.

⇒ Treating mental illnesses would reduce overcrowding in penitentiaries and jails, lower the risk of relapses and shorten the amount of time to complete rehabilitation than jail sentences.

### Effects of These Changes

Benefits	Drawbacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reduces overdose deaths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● May change the perception of substance abuse to seem less harmful</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As mental illness is treated, depression decreases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● May encourage drug use and increase surrounding crime</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Not expensive to operate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Might raise taxes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● May decrease criminal activity involving substances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SCS are voluntary and we cannot force people to do them</li> </ul>

## Approach 2: Prevention



According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, over 21 million Americans struggle with some form of substance abuse, in which children as young as 12 years old are included. There are many opportunities for preventative measures to help minimize this issue, in both education systems and other mediums. In society today, there are far too many advertisements about alcohol, which may be a leading factor in high rates of substance abuse among young adults. Substance abuse, such as drinking and doing drugs, is portrayed in movies that are seen by younger children, thus potentially giving them an idea of how people should act when they are older. This puts young teens at risk for addiction when they see that “everyone is doing it”. Teens are more likely to choose to participate in drinking and drugs because of what they are exposed to on different media platforms— especially teens who show signs of common risk factors. Not only do movies and commercials contribute to high rates of substance abuse, but so do issues in our country’s mental health care system. Unfit mental health, a large contributor to substance abuse, is rarely considered when treating abuse or looking into risk factors. This approach discusses how education and changes to advertising standards could be the way to combat our nation’s issue of substance abuse.

### Potential Changes

#### ▣ Limits the advertising of substances

- ⇒ Limit the number/ frequency of commercials for alcohol/cigarettes/etc.
  - I. Restrict appealing commercials that draw in young children (colorful depictions of people having fun while abusing substances)
  - II. Cigarette ads were severely limited in 1970 by President Nixon
- ⇒ Limit the time of day where companies are allowed to advertise substances
  - I. Set certain hours of day (for example, past 8pm) where companies can advertise adult substances to expose fewer children

#### ▣ Creates mandatory preventative programs at all levels of education

⇒ Create school programs for at risk youth in schools, especially in impoverished areas and inner cities where substance abuse is a greater issue

- I. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), when young children see drug use as harmful, they will reduce their levels of use
- II. According to the National Institute of Health, middle school based intervention programs used to combat alcohol use and other programs targeted at reducing social and environmental risk factors are be effective for prevention (ages 12 and 13 have high levels of beginning to use substances)

### ■ Regulates and addresses mental health

⇒ Help people tend to their mental health

- I. Combine prevention efforts with mental health by considering both when treating at risk children and adults
- II. SAMHSA, or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration states that increasing awareness increase the people who seek the treatment necessary
  - A. Prevention and early intervention in mental health and abuse tendencies promotes healthy-decision making and healthier behaviors

### Effects of These Changes

Benefits	Drawbacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Catches risk factors early on in high risk children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Preventative programs are not always effective (DARE program)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provides jobs and a source of revenue for adults in highly impoverished areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Limitations on advertisements will decrease business/ revenue for affected companies</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prevents children from partaking in illegal behaviors in the future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An effective school program would require a large amount of funding</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Manages mental illness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An effective mental health program would require a large amount of funding</li> </ul>

## Approach 3: Legalization and Decriminalization



The substance abuse crisis that this country faces today could be handled through a legalization and decriminalization approach. This approach highlights the legalization or decriminalization of recreational use of drugs and lowering the legal drinking age to 18 years old. One of the first states to legalize and regulate the sale of cannabis, Colorado, has seen rates of teen alcohol, tobacco and heroin use decrease sharply since legalization. Although cannabis use seems to have increased among 18-26 year olds, alcohol consumption, on the other hand, has fallen. To continue, there is evidence that lowering the drinking age to 18 years old would actually curb the amount of deaths in young adults. In Germany, drinking laws are more lax and allow drinking to start at a younger age. This results in far less young people drinking. The BZGA, Germany's Federal Health Center, reports a steep decline in alcohol usage by teens from 25% to 10% in the past 35 years. Thus, this would help foster a more acceptable approach to drinking rather than a far more abusive and dangerous one that the current system emboldens.

### Potential Changes

#### ■ *Legalization of recreational and medical drugs*

- ⇒ Invest in research of medical cannabis usage, and its possible benefits
- ⇒ Legalize the sale of recreational cannabis, taxed and regulated by the state

#### ■ *Decriminalize all non-violent drug offenses*

- ⇒ Repeal of the mandatory minimum sentencing, at the federal level, of drug use and possession
- ⇒ Recidivism is defined as the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend, and in the U.S. the current recidivism rate is 76.6% after five years in State prisons and 44.7% in Federal prisons according to the United States Sentencing Commission (USSC)

⇒ It is estimated that 17-18% of all federal prison inmates are in jail because they committed a crime in order to get drug money according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)

⇒ This change attempts to reduce that rate by decriminalizing the substances that put many in jail, and rather find ways to help those people

#### ■ Lower the age required to legally consume alcohol to 18 years old

⇒ This would be an effort to curb alcohol related deaths in young adults

#### ■ Place a cap on the amount of drugs that drug companies can import in a given time period, and require an audit of these companies to ensure compliance

⇒ Pharmacists and doctors that prescribe medicine, specifically opioids, must gain a second doctor or physician to approve the prescription before sending it

⇒ Lack of compliance with these regulations will result in a temporary ban on importation of drugs from said company, along with a fine determined by a judge

### Effects of These Changes

Benefits	Drawbacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● May lower arrest rates once legalization occurs, which is important for the wellbeing of people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● This may create increased drug and substance use, in turn increasing abuse</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Decreases prison populations and lowers crime rates nationwide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Less accountability and punishment</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increased tax revenue on legalized substances which will help the nation's economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There could be potentially more DUI crimes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Better research opportunities in substance abuse and its effects on society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Costs for rehabilitation of substance abuse may increase</li> </ul>

## Approach Summaries

### Approach 1: Treatment

Those who are incarcerated for abuse of substances are more likely to go to jail with no treatment and relapse while in detainment than get help. Not surprisingly, when the prisoners are released they rarely turn to treatment and are most likely to overdose in the first two weeks of their release. The proposed alternatives to jail are supervised consumption sites, rehabilitation over incarceration, and treating mental illness. This approach focuses on helping substances abusers get treatment.

Benefits	Drawbacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminates inmates going through relapse while in prison</li> <li>• Supervised consumption sites combat overdose deaths through supervision</li> <li>• Treating mental illnesses might decrease substance abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminates deterrence to use substances</li> <li>• May incidentally encourage crime</li> <li>• Could potentially raise taxes</li> <li>• Treatment programs are voluntary and cannot be forced onto people</li> </ul>

### Approach 2: Prevention

This approach aims to stop substances from reaching the hands of underage children to lower the rate of abuse. Young children start struggling early on with substance abuse due to an increased number of substance advertisements, and how the culture of substance abuse is portrayed in movies and television shows. A lack of mental health treatment is also an issue with substance abuse. This approach aims to prevent substance abuse through advertisement regulations and educational prevention programs that target risk factors and mental health awareness.

Benefits	Drawbacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displays substance abuse in its truthful light</li> <li>• Can provide employment to unemployed adults</li> <li>• May prevent children and teens from being exposed to substances altogether</li> <li>• Helps treat mental illness before addiction or abuse may occur</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventative programs are not always effective</li> <li>• Limiting advertisements will hurt the companies trying to market their products</li> <li>• Implementing school programs are costly and difficult to put together</li> </ul>

### Approach 3: Legalization and Decriminalization

The tendency of convicted criminals to reoffend in the United States averages at 60.65% for State and Federal prisons. This approach focuses on legalizing and decriminalizing certain substances to help rehabilitate American citizens rather than criminalize them, in order to help the people negatively affected by substance abuse.

Benefits	Drawbacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease in arrest rates</li> <li>• Decrease in prison population</li> <li>• Increase in Government tax revenue</li> <li>• Better research opportunities</li> <li>• Safer substances, increased scrutiny of users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased use in "gateway drugs"</li> <li>• Less accountability and punishment leading to lower deterrence to abuse</li> <li>• Possible increase in DUIs</li> <li>• Increase in Rehabilitation costs</li> </ul>

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## QUESTIONNAIRE

What is your preferred gender?

Male  Female  Other  Prefer Not to Answer

How old are you?

17 or younger  18 - 25  26 - 35  35 or older  Prefer Not to Answer

Where are you from?

A rural area  A suburban area (like State College)  A city

Prefer Not to Answer

What region of the United States are you from?

Northeast  South  West  Midwest  Unsure  Not from US

Prefer not to answer

Do you know anyone who has had problems with substance abuse?

Yes  No  Prefer Not to Answer

Were you able to fully express your opinion on the topic during our deliberation?

Yes  No  Prefer Not to Answer

-----  
 Do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

Substance abuse is a serious issue in the United States.

Strongly Agree  Agree  No Opinion  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

More supervised consumption sites should be developed.

Strongly Agree  Agree  No Opinion  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

Rehabilitation is preferable to incarceration.

Strongly Agree  Agree  No Opinion  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

We should focus on treatment of mental illnesses.

Strongly Agree  Agree  No Opinion  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

If someone chooses to abuse substances, it is their fault.

Strongly Agree    Agree    No Opinion    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

Someone who abuses substances is a criminal.

Strongly Agree    Agree    No Opinion    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

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Are there any other ideas or approaches that you think should have been brought up that were not? If so, please explain.

Please leave comments and any concerns you may have.

**Thank you for attending  
our deliberation.**