

## Harrison Narcotics Tax Act, 1914

Public Acts of the Sixty-Third Congress of the United States; 12/17/1914

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Originally posted 8/13/2004. [<http://www.doctordeluca.com/Library/WOD/HarrisonAct14.htm>].

Note: First two paragraphs written by Anonymous; this document, including opening paragraphs, photograph, and full text of the Act, is also available from:  
[[www.historicaldocuments.com/HarrisonNarcoticsTaxAct.htm](http://www.historicaldocuments.com/HarrisonNarcoticsTaxAct.htm)]

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The chief proponent of the Harrison Act was William Jennings Bryan, Secretary of State, who was a man of deep prohibitionist and missionary convictions. The supporters of the Harrison bill said little in the Congressional debates about the evils of narcotic addiction in the United States. They talked more about the need to implement the bill more for international obligations rather than for domestic morality. This bill was not a prohibition law at all. Its official title was "An act to provide for the registration of, with collectors of internal revenue, and to impose a special tax upon all persons who produce, import, manufacture, compound, deal in, dispense, sell, distribute, or give away opium or cocoa leaves, their salts, derivatives, or preparations, and for other purposes." The bill also required those physicians or manufactures of narcotics to pay a small fee in order to be licensed. The Harrison Narcotic Act was merely a law for the orderly marketing of narcotics. However it still gave physicians the right to prescribe narcotics.

The Geneva Opium Convention of 1925 was sponsored by The League of Nations to regulate the growing international drug trade. The Geneva Convention to Limit the Manufacture and Regulate the Distribution of Narcotic Drugs of 1931 placed a limit on every country's ability to manufacture narcotic drugs beyond international medical needs and many opiate factories were closed. However, the act caused drug traffickers to establish their own laboratories within the United States. The Conference for the Suppression of the Illegal Traffic in Dangerous Drugs of 1936 produced a treaty in which member nations agreed to cooperate in stopping narcotics trafficking. Harry Anslinger

was the Commissioner of the new Federal Bureau of Narcotics in the United States and pushed through Congress the Marihuana Tax Act of 1937 that made trafficking in marijuana illegal.

***Full text of the Act:***

Woodrow Wilson, President; Thomas R. Marshall, Vice-President; James P. Clarke, President of the Senate pro tempore; Claude A. Swanson, Acting President of the Senate pro tempore, December 21 to 23, 29 to 31, 1914, and January 2, 1915; Nathan P. Bryan, Acting President of the Senate pro tempore, January 22, 1915; Champ Clark, Speaker of the House of Representatives

Chap 1. - An Act To provide for the registration of, with collectors of internal revenue, and to impose a special tax on all persons who produce, import, manufacture, compound, deal in, dispense, sell, distribute, or give away opium or coca leaves, their salts, derivatives, or preparations, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that on and after the first day of March, nineteen hundred and fifteen, every person who produces, imports, manufactures, compounds, deals in, dispenses, distributes, or gives away opium or coca leaves or any compound, manufacture, salt, derivative, or preparation thereof, shall register with the collector of internal revenue of the district, his name or style, place of business, and place or places where such business is to be carried on: Provided, that the office, or if none, then the residence of any person shall be considered for purposes of this Act to be his place of business. At the time of such registry and on or before the first of July annually thereafter, every person who produces, imports, manufactures, compounds, deals in, dispenses, distributes, or gives away any of the aforesaid drugs shall pay to the said collector a special tax at the rate of \$1 per annum: Provided, that no employee of any person who produces, imports, manufactures, compounds, deals in, dispenses, distributes, or gives away any of the aforesaid drugs, acting within the scope of his employment, shall be required to register or to pay the special tax provided by this section: Provided further, That officers of the United States Government who are lawfully engaged in making purchases of the above-named drugs for the various departments of the Army and Navy, the Public Health Service, and for Government hospitals and prisons, and officers of State governments or any municipality therein, who are lawfully engaged in making purchases of the above-named drugs for State, county, or municipal hospitals or prisons, and officials of any Territory or insular possession, or the District of Columbia or of the United States who are lawfully engaged in making purchases of the above-named drugs for hospitals or prisons therein shall not be required to register and pay the special tax as herein required.

It shall be unlawful for any person required to register under the terms of this Act to produce, import, manufacture, compound, deal in, dispense, sell, distribute, any of the aforesaid drugs without having registered and paid the special tax provided for in this section.

That the word "person" in this Act shall be construed to mean and include a partnership, association, company, or corporation, as well as a natural person; and all provisions of existing law relating to special taxes, so far as applicable, including the provisions of section thirty-two hundred and forty of the Revised Statutes of the United States are hereby extended to the special tax herein imposed.

That the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, with the approval of the Secretary of the Treasury, shall make all needful rules and regulations for carrying the provisions of this Act into effect.

Sec. 2 That it shall be unlawful for any person to sell, barter, exchange, or give away any of the aforesaid drugs except in pursuance of a written order of the person to whom such article is sold, bartered, exchanged, or given, on a form to be issued in blank for that purpose by the Commissioner of Internal Revenue. Every person who shall accept any such order, and in pursuance thereof shall sell, barter, exchange, or give away any of the aforesaid drugs shall preserve such order for a period of two years in such a way as to be readily accessible to inspection by any officer, agent, or employee of the Treasury Department duly authorized for that purpose, and the State, Territorial, district, municipal and insular officials named in Section five of this Act. Every person who shall give an order as herein provided to any other person for any of the aforesaid drugs shall, at or before the time of giving of such order, make or cause to be made, a duplicate thereof on a form to be issued in blank for that purpose by the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, and in the case of the acceptance of such order, shall preserve such duplicate for said period of two years in such a way as to be readily accessible to inspection by the officers, agents, employees, and officials herein mentioned. Nothing contained in this section shall apply -

(a) To the dispensing or distribution of any of the aforesaid drugs to a patient by a physician, dentist, or veterinary surgeon registered under this Act in the course of his professional practice only: Provided, That such physician, dentist, or veterinary surgeon shall keep a record of all such drugs dispensed or distributed, showing the amount dispensed or distributed, the date, and the name and address of the person to whom such drugs are dispensed or distributed; except such as may be dispensed or distributed to a patient upon whom such physician, dentist, or veterinary surgeon shall personally attend; and such record shall be kept for a period of two years from the date of dispensing or distributing such drugs, subject to inspection, as provided in this Act.

(b) To the sale, dispensing, or distributing of any of the aforesaid drugs by a dealer to a consumer under and in pursuance of a written prescription issued by a physician, dentist, or veterinary surgeon registered under this Act. Provided, however, That such prescription shall be dated as of the day on which signed and shall be signed by the physician, dentist, or veterinary surgeon who shall have issued the same: And provided further, That such dealer shall preserve such prescription for a period of two years from the day on which such prescription is filled in such a way as to be readily accessible by the officers, agents, employees, and officials hereinbefore mentioned.

(c) To the sale, exportation, shipment, or delivery of any of the aforesaid drugs by any person within the United States or any Territory or the District of Columbia or any of the insular possessions of the United States to any person in any foreign country, regulating their entry in accordance with such regulations for importation thereof into such foreign country as are prescribed by said country, such regulations to be promulgated from time to time by the Secretary of State of the United States.

(d) To the sale, barter, exchange, or giving away of any of the aforesaid drugs to any officer of the United States Government, or any State, territorial, district, county, or municipal or insular government lawfully engaged in making purchases thereof for various departments of the Army and Navy, the Public Health Service, and for Government, State, territorial, district, county, or municipal, or insular hospitals and prisons.

The Commissioner of Internal Revenue, with the approval of the Secretary of the Treasury, shall cause suitable forms to be prepared for the purposes mentioned above, and shall cause the same to be distributed to collectors of internal revenue for sale by them to those persons who shall have registered and paid the special tax as required by section one of this Act, in their districts, respectively; and no collector shall sell any of such forms to any persons other than a person who has registered and paid the special tax as required by section one of this Act in his district. The price at which said forms shall be sold by collectors shall be fixed by the Commissioner of Internal Revenue with the approval of the Secretary of the Treasury, but shall not exceed the sum of \$1 per hundred. Every collector shall keep an account of the number of forms sold by him, the names of the purchasers, and the number of forms sold to each of such purchasers. Whenever any collector shall sell any of such forms, he shall cause the name of the purchaser thereof to be plainly stamped thereon before delivering the same; and no person other than such purchaser shall use any of said forms bearing the name of such purchaser for the purpose of procuring any of the aforesaid drugs, or furnish any of the forms bearing the name of such purchaser to any person with intent thereby to procure the shipment or delivery of any of the aforesaid drugs. It shall be unlawful for any person to obtain by means of said order forms any of the aforesaid drugs for any purpose other than the use, sale, or distribution thereof by him in the conduct of a lawful business in said drugs or in the legitimate practice of his profession.

The provisions of this Act shall apply to the United States, the District of Columbia, the Territory of Alaska, the Territory of Hawaii, the insular possessions of the United States, and the Canal Zone. In Porto Rico and the Philippine Islands the administration of this Act, the collection of said special tax, and the issuance of the order forms specified in section two shall be performed by the appropriate internal revenue officers of these governments, and all revenues collected hereunder in Porto Rico and the Philippine Islands shall accrue intact to the governments thereof, respectively. The courts of first instance in the Philippine Islands shall possess and exercise jurisdiction in all cases arising under this Act in said islands. The President is authorized and directed to issue such executive orders as will carry into effect in the Canal Zone the intent and purpose of this Act by providing for the registration and the imposition of a special tax upon all

persons in the Canal Zone who produce, import, compound, deal in, dispense, sell, distribute, or give away opium or coca leaves, their salts, derivatives, or preparations.

Sec. 3 That any person who shall be registered in any internal revenue district under the provisions of section one of this Act shall, whenever required to do so by the collector of the district, render to the said collector a true and correct statement or return, verified by affidavit, setting forth the quantity of aforesaid drugs received by him in said internal revenue district during such period immediately preceding the demand of the collector, not exceeding three months, as the said collector may fix and determine; the names of the persons from whom said drugs were received; the quantity in each instance of the quantity received from each of such persons, and the date received.

Sec. 4 That it shall be unlawful for any person who shall not have registered and paid the special tax as required by section one of this Act to send, ship, carry, or deliver any of the aforesaid drugs from any State or Territory or the District of Columbia, or any insular possession of the United States, to any person in any other State or Territory or the District of Columbia or any insular possession of the United States: Provided, that nothing contained in this section shall apply to common carriers engaged in transporting the aforesaid drugs, or to any employee acting within the scope of his employment, of any person who shall have registered and paid the special tax as required by section one of this Act, or to any person who shall deliver such drug which has been prescribed or dispensed by a physician, dentist, or veterinary surgeon required to register under the terms of this Act, who has been employed to prescribe for the particular patient receiving such drug, or to any United States, State, county, municipal, District, territorial, or insular officer or official acting within the scope of his official duties.

Sec. 5 That the duplicate-order forms and the prescriptions required to be preserved under the provisions of section two of this Act, and the statements or returns filed in the office of the collector of the district, under the provisions of section three of this Act, shall be open to inspection by officers, agents, and employees of the Treasury Department duly authorized for that purpose; and such officials of any State or Territory, or of any organized municipality therein, or of the District of Columbia, or any insular possession of the United States as shall be charged with the enforcement of any law or municipal ordinance regulating the sale, prescribing, dispensing, dealing in, or distribution of the aforesaid drugs. Each collector of internal revenue is hereby authorized to furnish, upon written request, certified copies of any of the said statements or returns filed in his office to any of such officials of any State or Territory, or organized municipality therein, or of the District of Columbia, or any insular possession of the United States, as shall be entitled to inspect said statements or returns filed in the office of the said collector, upon the payment of a fee of \$1 for each one hundred words in the copy or copies so requested. Any person who shall disclose the information contained in the said statements or returns or in the said duplicate-order forms, except as herein expressly provided, and except for the purpose of enforcing the provisions of this Act, or for the purpose of enforcing any law of any State or Territory, or the District of Columbia, or any insular possession of the United States, or ordinance of any organization or municipality therein, regulating the sale, prescribing, dispensing, dealing in, or distribution of the aforesaid drugs shall, on

conviction, be fined or imprisoned as provided by section nine of this Act. And collectors of internal revenue are hereby authorized to furnish upon written request, to any person, a certified copy of the names of any and all persons who may be listed in their respective collection district as special tax-payers under the provisions of this Act, upon payment of a fee of \$1 per hundred names or fraction thereof in the copy so requested.

Sec. 6 That the provisions of this Act shall not be construed to apply to the sale, distribution, or giving away, dispensing, or possession of preparations and remedies which do not contain more than two grains of opium, or more than one-fourth of a grain of morphine, or more than one-eighth of grain of heroin, or more than one grain of codeine, or any salt or derivative of them in one fluid ounce, or, if a solid or semi-solid preparation, in one avoirdupois ounce, or to liniments, ointments, and other preparations which contain cocaine or any of its salts or alpha or beta eucaine or any of their salts or any synthetic substitute for them: Provided, that such remedies and preparations are sold, distributed, given away, dispensed, or possessed as medicines and not for the purpose of evading the intentions and provisions of this Act. The provisions of this Act shall not apply to decocainized coca leaves or preparations made therefrom, or to other preparations of coca leaves which do not contain cocaine.

Sec. 7 That all laws relating to the assessment, collection, remission, and refund of internal revenue taxes, including section thirty-two hundred and twenty-nine of the Revised Statutes of the United States, so far as applicable to and not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby extended and made applicable to the special taxes imposed by this Act.

Sec. 8 That it shall be unlawful for any person not registered under the provisions of this Act, and who has not paid the special tax provided for by this Act, to have in his possession or under his control any of the aforesaid drugs; and such possession or control shall be presumptive evidence of a violation of this section, and also a violation of the provisions of section one of this Act: Provided, That this section shall not apply to any employee of a registered person, or to a nurse under the supervision of a physician, dentist, or veterinary surgeon registered under this Act, having such possession or control by virtue of his employment or occupation and not on his own account; or to the possession of any of the aforesaid drugs which has or have been prescribed in good faith by a physician, dentist, or veterinary surgeon registered under this Act; or to any United States, State, county, municipal, district, Territorial or insular officer or official who has possession of any of said drugs, by reason of his official duties, or to a warehouseman holding possession for a person registered and who has paid taxes under this Act; or to common carriers engaged in transporting such drugs; Provided further, that it shall not be necessary to negative any of the aforesaid exemptions in any complaint, information, indictment or other writ or proceeding laid or brought under this Act; and the burden of proof of any such exemption shall be upon the defendant.

Sec. 9 That any person who violates or fails to comply with any of the requirements of this Act shall, on conviction, be fined not more than \$2,000 or be imprisoned not more than five years, or both, in the discretion of the court.

Sec. 10 That the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, with the approval of the Secretary of the Treasury, is authorized to appoint such agents, deputy collectors, inspectors, chemists, assistant chemists, clerks, and messengers in the field and in the Bureau of Internal Revenue in the District of Columbia as may be necessary to enforce the provisions of this Act.

Sec. 11 That the sum of \$150,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary, be, and hereby is, appropriated, out of any moneys in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, for the purpose of carrying into effect the provisions of this Act.

Sec. 12 That nothing contained in this Act shall be construed to impair, alter, amend, or repeal any of the provisions of the Act of Congress approved June thirtieth, nineteen hundred and six entitled "An act for preventing the manufacture, sale, or transportation of adulterated, or misbranded, or poisonous, or deleterious foods, drugs, medicines, and liquors, and for regulating traffic therein, and for other purposes" and any amendment thereof, or of the Act approved February ninth, nineteen hundred and nine entitled, "An act to prohibit the importation and use of opium for other than medicinal purposes" and any amendment thereof.

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