

**Hemp in Vermont
Testimony Points
Thomas Murphy National Outreach Coordinator, Vote Hemp
in support of H 267**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and Committee Members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Tom Murphy. I am the National Outreach Coordinator of Vote Hemp. I am also a member of our Board of Directors. Vote Hemp is a national, single-issue, nonprofit organization dedicated to the acceptance of and free market for industrial hemp and to changes in current law to allow U.S. farmers to grow low-THC industrial hemp. Vote Hemp recommends that the Committee vote to pass H 267.

Hemp farming is an agricultural issue and related issues are health, environment, and economic development. Hemp is a legitimate agricultural crop with many high quality food, fiber, and fuel products made from it. Health Canada statistics show that the number of acres of hemp cultivated in Canada showed an 820% increase from 1998-2006. Acreage more that doubled from 2005-2006. Most of the acreage was oilseed varieties, but some was fiber varieties.

There are legitimate concerns that law enforcement may have with this and hemp bills in other states. These need to be addressed in a positive manner. In my opinion that has been done well in H 267, especially keeping flowers and leaves from entering the stream of commerce. Vote Hemp recommends that provisions for allowing transportation of viable hemp seed by license holders be added to the bill, as well as for processors to transport seed and stalks to their processing plants. This should alleviate the concerns of law enforcement regarding traffic stops as well as the need for a budget for testing in state labs.

In Canada hemp growers are licensed and their fields are registered with their GPS coordinates. Police can spot check these fields without notice, so surreptitiously growing high-THC varieties of *Cannabis* is not advised and can result in the loss of a hemp growing license. The provisions in H 267 are similar and when properly enforced by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture should more than satisfy any legitimate law enforcement concerns, as they have in Canada and other countries. H 267 has a provision in it stating that the Secretary shall be the sole source and supplier of seed for use in industrial hemp production in the state. The Agency of Agriculture should have a list of approved hemp varieties or cultivars. The Health Canada List of Approved Cultivars for the 2007 Growing Season is in your packets. It is printed on hemp.

The North Dakota Department of Agriculture (NDDA) is now issuing licenses to farmers to grow hemp under existing state law and NDDA rules. I presented testimony in favor of these rules at a hearing in Bismarck last June. There were five new bills introduced in their House and Senate in 2007. Two of the five have been signed by Governor Hoeven. Two of the bills were resolutions urging Congress to recognize the multiple benefits of industrial hemp. The fifth HB 1020, passed the House 92-0 on April 24th and passed the Senate 42-0 on April 25th. HB 1020 will now go to Governor Hoeven for his signature. North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner Roger Johnson and Representative Dave Monson will be able to give you more information on the latest in North Dakota. Please find a Vote Hemp press release in your packets, issued on Wednesday, for an outline of state hemp bills introduced in 2007.

Market research obtained by Vote Hemp shows that hemp food sales grew by at least 35% from August 2005 to August 2006. The sales data was collected by the market research firm SPINS, but under represents actual sales due to the niche status of hemp foods. The previous SPINS report showed a 50% sales growth. The increase in growth of the hemp food market from 2003-2006 was 336%. Most of the Canadian hemp is grown for seed, which is manufactured into food and cosmetics. The latest issue of *Prevention* magazine called hemp "the latest heart superfood." The *TODAY* show called hemp "one of the hottest food trends for 2007."

My written testimony provides more information on industrial hemp, including a definition of what exactly industrial hemp is, some background information on hemp as it relates to U.S. and international law, resolutions passed by national bodies in support of permitting hemp growing in the U.S., the benefits of local hemp production, and additional authoritative resources.

Vote Hemp recommends that the Committee vote to pass H 267. I would be happy to answer questions from the Committee.