

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 29, 2009



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Oregon Passes Hemp Bill Becomes Sixth State in 2009 to Take Action *State Pressure to Grow Hemp Continues to Mount as Business Booms*

SALEM, OR – Today, by a vote of 46 to 11, the Oregon House passed SB 676, a bill that permits production and possession of industrial hemp and trade in industrial hemp commodities and products. “I am glad that Oregon has joined the list of states that have agreed that American farmers should have the right to re-introduce industrial hemp as an agricultural crop,” says SB 676 sponsor, Sen. Floyd Prozanski. “By passing SB 676 with strong bi-partisan support, the Oregon Legislature has taken a proactive position to allow its farmers the right to grow industrial hemp, to provide American manufacturers with domestically-grown hemp, and to profit from that effort.” The Oregon Senate passed the bill by an overwhelming majority vote of 27 to 2 on June 19. Vote Hemp is optimistic that Governor Kulongoski will sign the bill. Oregon would become the ninth state to authorize regulated hemp farming under state law.

“The time has come for the federal government to act and allow farmers to once again grow hemp, so American companies will no longer need to import it and American farmers will no longer be denied a profitable new crop,” comments Vote Hemp President, Eric Steenstra. “Under current federal policy, industrial hemp can be imported, but it cannot be grown by American farmers. Hemp is a versatile, environmentally-friendly crop that has not been grown in the U.S. for over fifty years because of a misguided and politicized interpretation of the nation’s drug laws by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). While a new bill in Congress, HR 1866, is a welcome step, the hemp industry is hopeful that President Obama’s administration will recognize hemp’s myriad benefits to farmers, businesses and the environment,” adds Steenstra.

Many businesses in Oregon manufacture, market and sell hemp products, including Living Harvest, The Merry Hempsters, Wilderness Poets, Earthbound Creations, Sweetgrass Natural Fibers, Sympatico Clothing, Mama’s Herbal Soaps and Hempire. Living Harvest of Portland was recently ranked the third-fastest-growing company in Oregon, as awarded by *The Portland Business Journal’s* “Fastest-Growing Private 100 Companies” annual award.

“We are looking forward to the opportunity to invest in hemp processing and production locally,” says Hans Fastre, CEO of Living Harvest. “This bill represents another step towards heightening the hemp industry’s profile within mainstream America and making hemp products more accessible to businesses and consumers.”

These Oregon-based companies have been on the leading edge of the growing hemp food and body care markets, which are currently estimated to be \$113 million in North American annual retail sales by the Hemp Industries Association (HIA). The HIA estimates the 2008 annual retail sales of all hemp products in North America to be about \$360 million. By allowing U.S. farmers to once again grow hemp, legislators can clear the way for a “New Billion-Dollar Crop.”

On June 9, with little fanfare, Maine Governor John Baldacci signed the Maine hemp farming bill, LD 1159, into law. Maine’s House had previously passed the bill without objection, and the Senate later passed it by a strong vote of 25 to 10. The bill establishes a licensing regime for farming industrial hemp, although the licensing is contingent upon action by the federal government. Maine had previously passed a study bill that also defined industrial hemp.

During the 2009 legislative session, Montana, New Mexico, Vermont and North Dakota all passed resolutions or memorials urging Congress to allow states to regulate hemp farming. Sixteen states have passed pro-hemp legislation to date, and eight states (Hawaii, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Montana, North Dakota, Vermont and West Virginia) have removed barriers to its production or research. North Dakota has even issued state licenses to would-be hemp farmers for two years running.

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Vote Hemp is a national, single-issue, non-profit organization dedicated to the acceptance of and a free market for low-THC industrial hemp and to changes in current law to allow U.S. farmers to once again grow this agricultural crop. More information about hemp legislation and the crop’s many uses may be found at www.VoteHemp.com or www.HempIndustries.org. BETA SP or DVD Video News Releases featuring footage of hemp farming in other countries are available upon request by contacting Adam Eiding at 202-744-2671.