



The Industrial Hemp Farming Act (S. 134) will immediately create opportunities for jobs and business growth. It is critical

that we increase the number Senate and House cosponsors in order to pass federal legislation.

As a constituent stakeholder, you are in a unique position to educate and influence your Senators and Representative. It is really not as difficult as you might think. A carefully planned meeting can make a huge difference and Vote Hemp created this guide to make preparing and holding meetings with Congressional staff easy and effective.

Thank you for your activism on behalf of industrial hemp!

Building Relationships

- Members of Congress have offices in their district that will be convenient when you visit them in person. To find your closest district office, go to: www.VoteHemp.com/takeaction
- Begin building a relationship with your Congressional offices now if you haven't already. Like any relationship, it can take time to build rapport, through email, phone chats, and meetings. A few minutes for a phone call and email follow up can be a very effective start.
- When you call the district office, introduce yourself as a constituent and mention if you are a business owner or farmer. Ask which staff member handles industrial hemp and if you can speak with them. If they are not available, leave a short voice-mail asking them to call you back.
- Continue to stay in touch and follow up with short emails, links, and updates about hemp, whenever you have any news or updates that would be interesting including changes in state law or regulations.

Meeting in the District Office

- A face-to-face meeting with staff members is one of the most effective ways to educate your representatives and advocate for their support.
- A meeting should consist of an individual or small group of constituents. A farmer, a business owner, a political donor, a local leader (ie, county commissioner, delegate, etc), or representative from a state advocacy organization, will have the most impact.
- Reach out to your staff contact or the office scheduler via email or phone to request a meeting. If you need help finding the right contact, get in touch with Ben Droz: congress@votehemp.com
- You can ask when the Senator will be in town but understand that most meetings most often happen with staff. Work with the staffer or scheduler to find an ideal time. You can use the sample meeting request included at the end of this document.

Meeting Agenda



- Introduce yourself and **build rapport by talking about your local area, with a short personal story.** Keep a local focus throughout the meeting.
- At the beginning or end of the meeting, exchange business cards.
- Discuss how your state law allows for licensed hemp farming and mention that thirty-one (31) states have hemp laws and nineteen (19) states are proceeding with agricultural pilot programs raising and estimated 20,000 acres of domestic hemp.
- US Senate has a bipartisan bill pending (S. 134) to authorize states to regulate commercial hemp farming. Share a copy of S. 134.
- **Tell them S. 134 was introduced by Sen. Wyden and has sixteen bipartisan cosponsors.**
- Explain how the market for hemp products is growing and there is big potential new market for farmers. **Give them a copy of the HIA market press release.** tiny.cc/HEMPMARKET2015
- **Explain how access to seeds is a serious problem due to current law requiring DEA import permit.** Some profiteers are taking advantage and selling seed for outrageous prices. Lack of seed is limiting opportunities to start pilot programs.
- **DEA is not cooperating with states, and Kentucky had to file a lawsuit.** Some state departments of agriculture do not feel comfortable facilitating imports, leaving farmers stuck until S. 134 is approved.
- Current restrictions limiting to research and pilot programs don't allow most farmers to take full advantage of market opportunities.
- **Ask for your Senator's co-sponsorship of S. 134.**
- Meetings are typically 15-30 minutes. **Be concise and respectful of the staffers time.**
- **Make sure to pause and allow them to absorb the information and ask questions.**
- Make sure to articulate (and repeat) the ask, "I/we urge the Senator to become a cosponsor S. 134, the Industrial Hemp Farming Act."

Professionalism

- **Arrive to the meeting at least 5 minutes early.** Plan for unexpected delays due to traffic or finding a place to park.
- **Wear professional business attire** - a suit and tie or a dress for example.
- **Prepare beforehand** and learn about the Senator by checking Wikipedia, their website, or an article about them.
- **Print out the talking points and supporting materials for the meeting in advance.** This includes documents from our toolkit, literature from your company or organization, local news stories, and anything else that would help make your points. Product samples can also be very helpful.
- **Stay on message.** Focus on the talking points and don't stray from discussing industrial hemp. Avoid discussing other issues, especially where you may disagree. The meeting is your opportunity to make the case for industrial hemp.
- **Talk about how industrial hemp farming and/or manufacturing would benefit your county, city and state.** Discuss how it could drive job creation and spur economic development.
- You don't have to be an expert - a little relevant information can go a long way. **If you don't know an answer, this creates a nice opportunity for follow up.**

IMPORTANT: Follow Up

Following up is incredibly important. A short email after the meeting can go a long way.

Follow up on any unanswered questions. Provide links to any documents or other useful info.

Keep the conversation going with short emails with links, whenever local or hemp news stories come out.

Email Ben at: congress@votehemp.com to let us know how the meeting went.