



Leading Hemp Advocacy Groups Outraged by Governor Brown's Veto of California Industrial Hemp Farming Act

Veto of SB 676 is Huge Setback for California Farmers, Businesses and the Economy

SACRAMENTO, CA — Vote Hemp and the Hemp Industries Association (HIA), the nation's leading grassroots hemp advocacy organization and industry trade group, respectively, both working to revitalize industrial hemp production in the U.S., are extremely disappointed to report that Governor Jerry Brown has vetoed SB 676, the California Industrial Hemp Farming Act. After moving smoothly through the California legislature with bi-partisan support, Gov. Brown has vetoed this landmark legislation. The first hemp bill to land on Gov. Brown's desk, SB 676 is the fourth bill since 2002 in support of hemp farming to pass the California legislature but ultimately be vetoed by the Governor. The bill would have established guidelines for farming the oilseed and fiber varieties of the plant, which are used in a myriad of everyday consumer products, including food, body care, clothing, paper, auto parts, composites and building materials.

In a statement dated Oct. 9, Gov. Brown stated, "Federal law clearly establishes that all cannabis plants, including industrial hemp, are marijuana, which is a federally regulated controlled substance. Failure to obtain a permit from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration prior to growing such plants will subject a California farmer to federal prosecution." Despite his veto of the bill, he went on to express his support for legalizing hemp farming at the federal level. "Although I am not signing this measure, I do support a change in federal law. Products made from hemp - clothes, food, and bath products - are legally sold in California every day. It is absurd that hemp is being imported into the state, but our farmers cannot grow it." The veto letter from Governor Brown can be viewed at: <http://www.votehemp.com/veto>

Introduced by Senator Mark Leno earlier this year, SB 676 proposed to create an eight-year pilot program allowing industrial hemp farming in four California counties: Kern, Kings, Imperial and San Joaquin. The legislation would have allowed California farmers to grow industrial hemp for the legal sale of seed, oil and fiber to manufacturers.

"Vote Hemp and The Hemp Industries Association are extremely disappointed by Gov. Brown's veto. This is a big setback for not only the hemp industry — but for farmers, businesses, consumers and the California economy as a whole. Hemp is a versatile cash and rotation crop with steadily rising sales as a natural, renewable food and body care ingredient. It's a shame that Gov. Brown agreed that the ban on hemp farming was absurd and yet chose to block a broadly supported effort to add California to the growing list of states that are demanding the return of U.S. hemp farming. There truly was overwhelming bi-partisan support for this bill," explains Eric Steenstra, President of Vote Hemp and Executive Director of the HIA.

Strong support for the bill had come from Kings and Kern County Sheriffs and the Kings County Board of Supervisors, as well as from the California State Grange, the UCFW-5, the Imperial County Farm Bureau, the California Certified Organic Growers and other leading farm organizations. The bill also had broad based support from businesses and consumers.

“After four vetoes in ten years in California, it is clear we lack a Governor willing to lead on this important ecological, agricultural and economic issue. We will regroup, strategize and use this veto to our advantage at the federal level,” notes Vote Hemp Director and co-counsel Patrick Goggin.

Today, more than 30 industrialized nations grow industrial hemp and export it to the United States. Hemp is the only crop that is illegal to grow at the federal level, yet is legal for Americans to import. Among the numerous California-based companies who have supported the bill are Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps, makers of North America's top-selling natural soap, and Nutiva, a rising star among innovative health food companies. Both of these businesses currently must import hemp from other countries.

California businesses currently spend millions of dollars each year importing hemp, primarily from Canada, China and Europe. Demand for hemp products has been growing rapidly in recent years, and it is estimated that the U.S. hemp market now exceeds \$419 million in annual retail sales. From natural soaps to healthy foods, there is a large variety of "Made in California" hemp products whose manufacturers and buyers will greatly benefit from an in-state source of hemp seed, fiber and oil.

The environmental and agricultural benefits are not limited to the versatility of uses. Industrial hemp is an excellent rotation crop because its dense growth smothers weeds without herbicides and helps to break the disease cycle. Hemp requires less water and agricultural inputs than other crops, has deep taproots that leave the soil in excellent condition for the next crop, and is proven to increase yields. These benefits save farmers money and reduce the amount of pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilizers that run into our waterways.

#

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.TheHIA.org. Video footage of hemp farming in other countries is available upon request by contacting Ryan Fletcher at 202-641-0277 or ryan@votehemp.com.