



Vote Hemp Encourages Support for Proposed Amendment by Senator Wyden on Industrial Hemp in the Farm Bill

Amendment would Exclude Industrial Hemp from the Definition of Marihuana

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Vote Hemp released an action alert today encouraging support for Senator Ron Wyden’s proposed amendment to the Farm Bill, S.3240, the Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2012, which would exclude industrial hemp from the definition of ‘marihuana.’ Senator Wyden’s amendment will empower American farmers by allowing them to once again grow industrial hemp, a profitable commodity with an expanding market. The cultivation of industrial hemp will be regulated by state permitting programs, like North Dakota’s, and will not impact the federal government’s long-standing prohibition of marijuana. The language of the amendment mirrors that of H.R. 1831, a bill introduced in the House this session (See: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.uscongress/legislation.112hr1831>).

To view the amendment, please go to: <http://votehemp.com/legislation>

“Industrial hemp is used in many healthy and sustainable consumer products. However, the federal prohibition on growing industrial hemp has forced companies to needlessly import raw materials from other countries,” says Senator Ron Wyden (D-Oregon). “My amendment to the Farm Bill will change federal policy to allow U.S. farmers to produce hemp for these safe and legitimate products right here, helping both producers and suppliers to grow and improve Oregon’s economy in the process.”

To date, thirty-one states have introduced pro-hemp legislation and seventeen have passed legislation, while eight states (Hawaii, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Montana, North Dakota, Vermont and West Virginia) have removed barriers to its production or research. However, despite state authorization to grow hemp, farmers in these states risk raids by federal agents and possible forfeiture of their farms if they plant the crop, due to the failure of federal policy to distinguish oilseed and fiber varieties of *Cannabis* (i.e., industrial hemp) from psychoactive drug varieties.

“This is the first time since the 1950’s that language supporting hemp has come to the floor of the House or Senate for a vote. The last time such language was presented was the Miller’s Amendment to the Marihuana Tax Act,” says Eric Steenstra, President of Vote Hemp. “The time is past due for the Senate as well as President Obama and the Attorney General to prioritize the crop’s benefits to farmers and to take action like Representative Ron Paul (R-Texas) and the cosponsors of H.R. 1831 have done. With the U.S. hemp industry valued at over \$400 million in annual retail sales and growing, a change in

federal policy to allow hemp farming would mean instant job creation, among many other economic and environmental benefits," adds Steenstra.

The Farm Bill is the primary agricultural and food policy tool of the federal government. The comprehensive omnibus bill is passed every five years or so by the United States Congress and deals with both agriculture and all other affairs under the purview of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Last year, for the fourth time since the federal government outlawed hemp farming in the United States over 50 years ago, a bill was introduced by Rep. Paul in the U.S. House of Representatives. If passed the bill H.R. 1831, the Industrial Hemp Farming Act of 2011, would remove restrictions on the cultivation of industrial hemp, the non-drug oilseed and fiber varieties of *Cannabis*. Senator Wyden would like to introduce a companion bill in the Senate.

"Senator Wyden's effort is unprecedented and totally commendable, but in my view the existing prohibition of hemp farming stems less from current law, but rather the misinterpretation of existing law by the Obama Administration," says Steenstra.

The amendment comes on the heels of the Obama Administration's reply to Vote Hemp's We the People petition. The response conflates industrial hemp as a Schedule 1 controlled substance. This contradicts the clear definition of marijuana presented in Title 21 of United States Code 802(16) that explicitly excludes the oilseed and fiber varieties of the hemp plant that are legal to manufacture, consume, process and purchase throughout the United States without penalty of controlled substance violation. The hemp farming petition and the administration's response can be found at <http://wh.gov/gKH>.

The timing of Senator Wyden's amendment also coincides with the 3rd annual **Hemp History Week** campaign, June 4-10, 2012, which he supports. The national grassroots education campaign organized by Vote Hemp and The Hemp Industries Association is designed to renew strong support for the return of hemp farming to the U.S. The 2012 **Hemp History Week** campaign will feature over 800 events in cities and towns throughout all fifty states.

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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.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.