



Senator Rand Paul, Vote Hemp, and Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps Team Up to Revive the Kentucky Industrial Hemp Commission and Re-Commercialize Hemp in the United States

Kentucky Initiative Seeks to Pass Laws on the State and Federal Level to Allow Widespread Growth of Industrial Hemp

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Nov. 14 at 10:00 a.m. ET, representatives of the nation's leading industrial hemp advocacy group, Vote Hemp, and top-selling natural soap brand Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps will meet with Kentucky Senator Rand Paul's staff and members of the revived Kentucky Industrial Hemp Commission, led by Kentucky Agriculture Commissioner James Comer, for a special meeting of the Kentucky Industrial Hemp Commission to be held at the Kentucky Department of Agriculture in Frankfort, KY. Under the leadership of Senator Paul and Commissioner Comer, this group of industry and political leaders is uniquely positioned to advance Kentucky to be the first state to allow hemp farming with federal regulation. The initiative is being financed by a \$50,000 contribution from Sen. Paul's political action committee and a matching donation of \$50,000 from Dr. Bronner's.

In August 2012, Commissioner Comer announced that he is restarting the long-dormant Kentucky Industrial Hemp Commission. The General Assembly created the commission 10 years ago to look into hemp's potential in the Commonwealth. Commissioner Comer and Sen. Paul are now determined to revive the dormant project with the goal of making Kentucky the first state to re-commercialize industrial hemp. Based on a University of Kentucky study from more than a decade ago, the total economic impact from a hemp processing facility located in Kentucky selling certified seed would create a significant number of jobs and earnings.

"Kentucky has the perfect soil and climate to be the nation's top producer of industrial hemp," Commissioner Comer said. "Studies have shown that hemp could be at least the third most profitable crop in Kentucky and our farmers could capture the lion's share of the industry."

Commissioner Comer is working with Sen. Paul to pass laws on the state and federal levels to allow widespread growth of industrial hemp.

"Kentucky needs jobs. Everybody says they are for job creation, but supporting industrial hemp is their chance to prove it," Sen. Paul said. "Industrial hemp could create thousands of production and manufacturing jobs and Kentucky has the opportunity to be first in line for them. I strongly urge all Kentuckians to call their legislators and other elected officials and ask them to support the industrial hemp initiative."

Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps currently purchases over \$100,000 of organic hemp oil from Canadian producers annually but would prefer to source hemp from American farmers.

"Hemp seed is a well-balanced source of protein with all amino acids as well as an oil extremely high in the omega 3 and 6 essential fatty acids that make our soaps' lather smoother and less drying," said David Bronner, President of Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps, whose annual sales total over \$50 million. "We want to be the first U.S. brand to start using hemp from American rather than Canadian farmers, once they can grow hemp again in Kentucky. We are planning a new line of food products made with American farmed hemp seed and oil, to capitalize on the booming U.S. market for nutritious foods made with hemp seeds."

The Hemp Industries Association estimates that U.S. retail sales of hemp products exceeded \$452 million in 2011, though all hemp raw materials used to make those products were imported. U.S. companies that manufacture or sell products made with hemp include best-selling hemp food manufacturers, such as French Meadow Bakery, Living Harvest Foods, Manitoba Harvest, Nature's Path, Navitas Naturals, Nutiva and Vega who make their products from hemp grown in Canada. Sustainable hemp seed, fiber and oil are also used by major companies such as Ford Motors, Patagonia and The Body Shop.

"Since industrial hemp farming was effectively outlawed in the U.S. earlier last century, five federal bills have been introduced in Congress to lift the ban on hemp agriculture in America," said Eric Steenstra, President of Vote Hemp. "In August of 2012, Sen. Paul along with Senators Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) introduced S. 3501, as a companion bill to Rep. Ron Paul's (R-Texas) Industrial Hemp Farming Act (H.R. 1831), both of which would remove federal restrictions on the cultivation of hemp in the U.S."

To date, seventeen states have passed pro-hemp legislation, and six states (Maine, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, Vermont and West Virginia) have already authorized the licensing of farmers to grow the crop. However, despite state authorization to grow hemp, farmers in these states risk raids by federal agents, prison time and land forfeiture 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 varieties.

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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.