

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kentucky Industrial Hemp Farming Bill SB 50 Becomes Law

Bill Promises Economic Opportunity by Removing Restrictions on Industrial Hemp Farming

FRANKFORT, KY – Vote Hemp, the nation's leading hemp grassroots advocacy organization and industry trade group, working to revitalize industrial hemp production in the U.S., is pleased to report that SB 50, the Kentucky industrial hemp farming bill has become law. Rather than sign the bill, Governor Beshear announced on Friday that he would take no action and allow SB 50 to become law by default. After moving smoothly through the Kentucky Senate with strong bipartisan support, and a very rocky trip through the House, this landmark legislation has now become Kentucky law. The full text of the bill may be found at: <http://www.VoteHemp.com/KY>.

“I thank Senator Paul Hornback for introducing SB 50 and ensuring that we have a responsible framework in place for industrial hemp production in Kentucky. But our work is far from over. In May of this year, I plan to lead a bipartisan delegation to Washington, D.C. to pursue a permit that would allow Kentucky to be the first state to grow industrial hemp and benefit from the jobs that will result,” Kentucky Agriculture Commissioner James Comer said. “I also thank Senators Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul and Representatives Thomas Massie and John Yarmuth for their support here at home and for sponsoring legislation in Congress. Our shared vision is to create new opportunities for our farmers and to own the industrial hemp market...from automobile parts manufacturing and textiles to cosmetics and health foods. We now have a unified message that Kentucky wants to be first!”

So far in the 2013 legislative season industrial hemp legislation has been introduced in eighteen states: Alabama, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia. Industrial hemp legislation is expected to be introduced in at least one more state as well (Michigan). The full text of the bills may be found at: <http://VoteHemp.com/legislation>.

“Kentucky has a long history of industrial hemp farming, and the state is poised to lead the hemp farming and processing industry again, as soon as the federal government recognizes the value of hemp and allows states to oversee its production,” says Vote Hemp President, Eric Steenstra. “With the U.S. hemp industry valued at an estimated \$500 million in annual retail sales and growing, a change in federal policy to once again allow hemp farming would mean instant job creation, among many other economic and environmental benefits,” adds Steenstra.

Two industrial hemp bills have been introduced in the 113th Congress so far. H.R. 525, the "Industrial Hemp Farming Act of 2013," was introduced in the U.S. House on February 6, 2013 with 28 bipartisan cosponsors. The companion bill, S. 359, was introduced in the U.S. Senate on February 14, 2013. The bills define industrial hemp, exclude it from the definition of "marihuana" in the Controlled Substances Act, and give states the exclusive authority to regulate the growing and processing of industrial hemp under state law. If passed, the bills would remove federal restrictions on the domestic cultivation of industrial hemp, defined as the non-drug oilseed and fiber varieties of *Cannabis*. The full text of the bills, as well as status and co-sponsors, can be found at: <http://www.VoteHemp.com/legislation>.

To date, thirty-one states have introduced pro-hemp legislation and nineteen have passed such legislation. Eight states (Colorado, Maine, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, Vermont, Washington and West Virginia) have defined industrial hemp as distinct and removed barriers to its production. Three states (Hawaii, Kentucky and Maryland) have passed bills creating commissions or authorizing hemp research. Nine states (California, Colorado, Illinois, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Vermont and Virginia) have passed hemp resolutions. Six states (Arkansas, Maine, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina and Vermont) have passed hemp study bills. However, despite state authorization to grow hemp, farmers in those states still risk raids by federal agents, prison time, and property and civil asset forfeiture if they plant the crop, due to the failure of federal policy to distinguish non-drug oilseed and fiber varieties of *Cannabis* (i.e., industrial hemp) from psychoactive drug varieties (i.e., "marihuana.")

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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 the 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.