

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Hemp Seizure in Capitol Underscores Confusion Over *Cannabis* Hemp Industry Seeks Beer Summit with Capitol Police**

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Vote Hemp legislative assistant Ben Droz was shocked when Capitol Police seized his samples of industrial hemp fiber that he needed for a scheduled presentation to congressional staffers. Police refused to release the fiber after the search, while saying they knew it had no drug value and was “just hemp.” The group of officers decided they needed to confiscate all the hemp seeds because no food was allowed, but the hemp fiber was also seized even though it is not food. “I just want to throw this out,” said one officer, who ultimately did.

Mr. Droz explained to police that the items were being used to illustrate the environmental properties of hemp. “This is just another example of the confusion between Industrial Hemp, an important crop for farmers across the country, and marijuana, a distant cousin also from the *Cannabis* family.” The United States is the only developed country that does not recognize the distinction between the two varieties. Mr. Droz admits, “I gave up the hemp to police, fearing arrest at the time, and now feel compelled to raise this issue so it does happen again because I carry hemp every time I visit the U.S. Capitol.”

“The fact that this level of confusion among law enforcement still exists today is exactly why federal policy on hemp needs to change,” says Vote Hemp President Eric Steenstra. “We hope for the return of Vote Hemp’s property, an apology, and perhaps, a Capitol Hill beer summit or Congressional hearings to discuss our differences with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).”

Hemp products have been subject to confusion in the past. In 2002, the DEA attempted to ban imports on hemp foods, despite the growing recognition of its value to farmers and consumers. Vote Hemp, the Hemp Industries Association, and several U.S. and Canadian companies, successfully challenged the DEA in a lawsuit calling the ban unwarranted and illegal. Since this ban was lifted, the hemp industry has grown substantially every year. Last year alone, grocery store sales of hemp food products grew over 40%.

Since 2005, the Industrial Hemp Farming Act (H.R. 1866) and its predecessors have been waiting for a hearing in the House, but it’s been tabled the entire time. The bill has a dozen bi-partisan cosponsors, and allows states like Oregon (as of Jan. 2010), Maine, Vermont, North Dakota, Montana (and many others) to grow hemp based on State laws. Sixteen states have already passed legislation, and many, like the ones listed above, are simply waiting for the federal ban to be lifted once again. Mr. Droz has been working with Vote Hemp in order to raise congressional awareness about this marginalized issue.

The growing market proves the case of hemp. Food sales have grown every year since the ban was lifted. Other parts of the hemp plant, such as those confiscated from Droz, can be used to make any number of consumer products, while all jobs generated from the industry could be as green collar jobs.

Despite a growing global industry, U.S. farmers are still unable to grow hemp. All hemp in the U.S. must be imported from other countries to be either processed or sold here.

“It’s ironic that the very items I was using to clear up confusion, became the subject of contraband and were confiscated,” Mr. Droz comments after the incident.

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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](http://www.VoteHemp.com) or [www.HempIndustries.org](http://www.HempIndustries.org). BETA SP or DVD Video News Releases featuring footage of hemp farming in other countries are available upon request from Adam Eiding at 202-744-2671.*