



Backgrounder

I-502 and Industrial Hemp

Initiative 502 decriminalizes industrial hemp under Washington law.

Hemp is a renewable resource used in many industrial and other goods.¹

- Hemp fibers are used in fabrics and textiles, yarns and raw or processed spun fibers, paper, carpeting, home furnishings, construction and insulation materials, auto parts, and composites.
- Hemp seed and oilcake are used in a range of foods and beverages, and can be an alternative food protein source.
- Oil from crushed hemp seed is an ingredient in a range of body-care products and nutritional supplements, and is also used for industrial oils, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals.

Industrial hemp is cannabis having no more than 0.3% THC concentration.

- Current laws regulating hemp cultivation in the European Union and Canada use three tenths of one percent (0.3%) tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) concentration as the dividing line between industrial hemp and cannabis with intoxicating levels of THC, commonly called “marijuana.” The Industrial Hemp Farming Act of 2011² also uses this definition for industrial hemp.
- I-502 modifies the definition of “marijuana” under Washington state law to include only cannabis with greater than 0.3% THC concentration.³ Therefore, cannabis under this limit – industrial hemp – will no longer be treated as “marijuana” and will no longer be subject to the penalties described in Washington’s Uniform Controlled Substances Act.

Our nation’s farmers should be allowed to grow hemp.

- Annual retail sales of hemp-based products in the U.S. are estimated to exceed \$400 million.⁴
- The value of U.S. imports of hemp was nearly \$10.5 million in fiscal year 2010.⁵
- The single largest supplier of U.S. imports of raw and processed hemp fibers is China.⁶

I-502 will not make domestic hemp production legal under federal law; Congress must act in order for that to happen. However, I-502 will decriminalize hemp production under Washington state law, which will remove the current threat of state and local law enforcement and eliminate any future delay for Washington’s agricultural community when federal law changes.

¹ U.S. Congressional Research Service. Hemp as an Agricultural Commodity (RL32725; Jan. 19, 2012), by Renée Johnson. Available at <http://nationalaglawcenter.org/assets/crs/RL32725.pdf>; accessed Sep. 28, 2012.

² H.R. 1831, introduced in Congress by U.S. Representative Ron Paul on May 11, 2011, with 35 co-sponsors as of September 28, 2012. Companion bill S. 3501 was introduced by U.S. Senator Ron Wyden on August 2, 2012, with 3 co-sponsors.

³ Initiative Measure No. 502, Sec. 2(s).

⁴ *Supra*, n.1.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*