

2001 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 605

Requesting the Commission on Rural Prosperity to consider the growth and production of industrial hemp in Virginia as a means to promote rural prosperity.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 2, 2001

Agreed to by the Senate, February 14, 2001

WHEREAS, although industrial hemp is derived from the *Cannabis sativaplant*, it is distinctive from its better known relative, in that it contains less than one percent of the chemical responsible for its psychoactive properties; and

WHEREAS, similar to jute and flax, industrial hemp's three principal raw materials—fiber, hurds, and seeds can be used in more than 25,000 products, including textiles, rope, cellulose plastics, resin, particle board, paper products, shampoo, vitamins and oil; and

WHEREAS, faltering agricultural economies in a number of states have created pressure to investigate alternative crops, including industrial hemp; and

WHEREAS, the 1996 Farm Bill has reduced and will continue to reduce government subsidies, pushing farmers to examine alternative cash crops; and

WHEREAS, increased foreign competition in established markets, such as tobacco, as well as innovative work with industrial hemp by Canada and the European community, have prompted increased interest in the economic vitality of industrial hemp; and

WHEREAS, the histories of the United States and Virginia are replete with examples of the utility of and dependence on industrial hemp, which was legally cultivated in Virginia and many other states until the late 1930s; and

WHEREAS, the industrial hemp industry has recently experienced a revitalization, with worldwide hemp sales continuing to increase; and

WHEREAS, in 1996 the American Farm Bureau Federation, representing 4.6 million farmers nationwide, passed a unanimous resolution urging research into the viability and economic potential of industrial hemp; and

WHEREAS, the growing of industrial hemp in the United States has been allowed only by federal permit, and the conditions of such a permit are so restrictive as to make the experimental cultivation of hemp, even under the auspices of a state university with strict controls, essentially impossible; and

WHEREAS, the United States Drug Enforcement Administration correctly states that it has never turned down an application for the experimental cultivation of hemp, but it is equally true that due to the excessive restrictions placed on the required permit, only the State of Hawaii is currently authorized by the federal government to cultivate hemp; and

WHEREAS, during the 1999 Session, the General Assembly passed House Joint Resolution No. 94, urging the federal government to revise the necessary regulations so as to permit the controlled, experimental cultivation of industrial hemp in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the United States Drug Czar and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) raised objections to even the controlled, experimental cultivation of industrial hemp; and

WHEREAS, in May 2000, the State of Maryland enacted legislation to establish a four-year pilot program to grow industrial hemp on state-owned land under tightly controlled circumstances; and

WHEREAS, legislatures in both North Dakota and Minnesota have recently enacted legislation allowing farmers statewide to cultivate hemp and the Illinois legislature is likely to reconsider a bill referred during the last session to allow two state universities to study the feasibility of cultivating industrial hemp; and

WHEREAS, increased interest by states in the cultivation and production of industrial hemp has prompted the DEA to review its hard line stance, and expected changes in the administration of the agency due to the recent election may result in the easing of current restrictions; and

WHEREAS, other states are positioning themselves to produce industrial hemp and the Commonwealth of Virginia should be prepared to cultivate industrial hemp if the current restrictions are eased; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Commission on Rural Prosperity be requested to consider the growth and production of industrial hemp in Virginia as a means to promote rural prosperity. In its deliberations, the Commission shall confer with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the Department of Environmental Quality, and the Virginia State Police regarding the appropriateness and efficacy of developing guidelines for cultivating industrial hemp; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit copies of this resolution

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to the Secretary of Commerce and Trade, the Secretary of Natural Resources, and the Secretary of Public Safety so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly on this matter.