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NO. R-222. JOINT RESOLUTION URGING THE UNITED STATES DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY TO REVIEW THE NEW CANADIAN INDUSTRIAL HEMP POLICIES.

(J.R.H. 149)

Offered by: Committee on Agriculture.

Whereas, Agricultural Day, which in 1998 is on March 20, celebrates Vermont's proud and historic reliance on the agricultural sector for a major source of its economic livelihood, and

Whereas, a variety of farming activities are all significant components of Vermont's agricultural economy, and

Whereas, despite Vermonters' dedicated efforts, many of the agricultural endeavors that have traditionally provided the economic sustenance for our state are no longer as financially rewarding as in years past, and

Whereas, a potentially lucrative new source for agricultural growth is the planting and harvesting of cannabis plants which can be the base for many useful and marketable industrial hemp-based goods, and

Whereas, in 1996, the Vermont General Assembly enacted Act No. 176 which directed the University of Vermont to investigate the viability of industrial hemp, and

Whereas, while two reports issued by the University of Vermont in response to

Act No. 176 did find potential, albeit speculative, economic benefits from the production of industrial hemp, the state and federal law enforcement communities remain unalterably opposed to the cultivation of the cannabis plant, citing its negative impact on the prosecution of the growers and sellers of marijuana, and

Whereas, the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration has indicated that under no circumstances would it grant a blanket exemption to the state of Vermont for the harvesting of cannabis plants that are suitable only for the production of industrial hemp and not the cultivation of marijuana, and

Whereas, the stringent criteria established under 21 U.S.C. § 823 and its implementing regulation, 21 C.F.R. § 1301.71 and 72 present a nearly insurmountable barrier to the initiation of an industrial hemp crop in Vermont, and

Whereas, under recently adopted Canadian policies, our neighbors to the north will now be permitted to commercially produce industrial hemp, and

Whereas, this economic advantage deprives Vermont of a significant new agriculturally based market, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly strongly urges the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration to review the procedures under which their Canadian counterparts are authorized to sanction the commercial development of industrial hemp, and to consider recommending to the President and Congress of the United States that the federal government adopt the necessary statutes and regulations that would permit similar policies south of the 49th parallel, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Director of the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration, the members of the Vermont Congressional Delegation and to the President of the United States.

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