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Vote Hemp Issues Statement in Response to Unjust DEA Raid of Menominee Indian Reservation Industrial Hemp Crop

Hemp Advocacy Organization Calls on Obama Administration and DOJ to Intervene in Favor of Menominee Indian Tribe

WASHINGTON, DC – Vote Hemp, the nation’s leading grassroots hemp advocacy organization working to change state and federal laws to allow commercial hemp farming, has released a statement in response to the undue and wrongful raid of industrial hemp crops on the sovereign land of the Menominee Indian Tribe by the Drug Enforcement Administration, which occurred Friday October 23, 2015.

“The DEA action in this case is egregious, excessive and presents an unjust prejudice against Indian Country and the rights of sovereign tribal nations,” said Eric Steenstra, President of Vote Hemp. “The Menominee Indian Tribe cultivated their industrial hemp in accordance with Federal Law, per the legislation put forth in the Farm Bill. This is a step backward, at a time when great progress has otherwise been made toward legalizing and regulating industrial hemp cultivation.”

To view the statement from the Chair of the Menominee Indian Tribe, visit:

<http://bit.ly/1XwDc7R>.

The affidavit for search and seizure warrant that authorized federal DEA agents to enter the Menominee Indian Reservation revealed a lack of DEA knowledge of hemp cultivation methods, incorrect information regarding means for identifying industrial hemp, and furthermore violated the Menominee Tribe’s sovereign rights per their status as Indian Country.

Specifically, though the Menominee Tribe had previously voluntarily submitted samples of their hemp crop for reliable laboratory testing of THC levels, the crop was destroyed by federal agents after first testing negative in a narcotics field test, and then testing positive on a second narcotics field test. Such tests are not designed to identify industrial hemp vs. “marijuana,” the former of which is federally defined as having less than 0.3% tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) by dry weight.

Harvested industrial hemp had been hung for drying in a barn—a conventional, standard process that farmers around the country including those in Kentucky and Colorado have utilized for drying their 2015 hemp crops. Despite this being a ubiquitous practice for industrial hemp processing and the fact that the plants were non-toxic and harmless, the affidavit claimed this practice presented a “health and safety concern for the community and individuals associated with the operation.”

As part of Indian Country, the Menominee Indian Reservation is exempt from county and state criminal law of Wisconsin; rather, these tribal lands are subject to federal law. The affidavit erroneously claimed that the industrial hemp crop in question violated Wisconsin law, as the state of Wisconsin has not legalized industrial hemp cultivation; however Wisconsin State law does not govern the Menominee Indian Reservation.

To view the affidavit for search and seizure, visit: <http://bit.ly/1PSiNrH>

“The outrageous course of action pursued by the DEA in this instance contradicts clear Congressional intent regarding the cultivation of industrial hemp laid out in the Farm Bill and confirmed in the hemp amendment to the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill which prohibits DEA from spending money to block implementation of the Farm Bill hemp provision,” continued Eric Steenstra. “Vote Hemp calls on President Obama and the Department of Justice to intervene, such that no further DEA harassment takes place against sovereign tribal nations cultivating industrial hemp.”

To date, twenty-six states have defined industrial hemp as distinct and removed barriers to its production. These states are able to take immediate advantage of the industrial hemp research and pilot program provision, Section 7606 of the Farm Bill: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, North Dakota, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia.

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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 Lauren Stansbury at 402.540.1208 or lauren@votehemp.com.