



## **Congress Introduces Industrial Hemp Farming Act with New Framework for Cultivation, Regulation and Commerce**

### ***Vote Hemp Continues Advocacy to Improve Bill with Amendments Needed to Protect Growth of Hemp Industry in the U.S.***

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Vote Hemp, the nation's leading grassroots hemp advocacy organization working to change state and federal laws to allow commercial hemp farming, supports the introduction of the Congressional bill H.R. 3530, The Industrial Hemp Farming Act of 2017, on July 27, 2017. If passed, The Industrial Hemp Farming Act of 2017 would remove federal restrictions on the cultivation of industrial hemp, the non-drug oilseed and fiber variety of *Cannabis*. The full text of the bill may be found at:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/3530>.

H.R. 3530 is remarkably different than previous iterations of Congressional bills that sought to lift federal prohibition on hemp farming. The bill allows for commercial cultivation of industrial hemp that has a THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) content of no more than 0.3 percent by dry weight, consistent with the definition of industrial hemp provided in Sec. 7606 of the Farm Bill. Yet, additionally, H.R. 3530 would allow for research cultivation on industrial hemp crops with a THC content of up to 0.6 percent by dry weight. Furthermore, per Vote Hemp advocacy on the issue, H.R. 3530 expands federally legal commercial hemp cultivation to tribal lands, reservations and U.S. territories—lands that had previously been omitted in Sec. 7606 of the Farm Bill, which allowed only for hemp farming programs in 'States.'

However, despite these worthy additions to the Industrial Hemp Farming Act, H.R. 3530 contains provisions that Vote Hemp asserts will severely hamper the growth of the hemp industry in the U.S. Specifically, H.R. 3530 allows for the Drug Enforcement Administration to conduct "administrative inspections" of hemp farms and locations where there is "production, storage, distribution or use" of industrial hemp. This overly broad language perpetuates the misclassification of industrial hemp as a drug, rather than an agricultural commodity, and fails to allow states to regulate the crop.

Vote Hemp also objects to a provision in H.R. 3530 that, if passed, would harm the nascent CBD product manufacturing industry and market in the U.S., annual retail sales of which were estimated at \$130 million in 2016, constituting 19% of the U.S. hemp market. Finally, H.R. 3530 fails to amend the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, thereby allowing the Food and Drug Administration to continue its regulatory oversight of CBD products as a controlled substance drug, rather than as a dietary supplement.

The bill neither makes mention of restricting hemp cultivation or commercial production of U.S. grown hemp regarding the presence of other cannabinoids in the hemp plant nor does it restrict the definition of hemp according to specific botanical parts of the hemp plant.

"It's imperative that members of Congress understand and recognize industrial hemp as an historic, versatile and lucrative crop for farmers," said Eric Steenstra, President of Vote Hemp. "Hemp is in no way a drug form of cannabis, CBD from hemp is not listed under the Controlled Substances Act, and it should be regulated as such. Vote Hemp is committed to working with House and Senate members to amend the bill, so that these harmful provisions are corrected or removed."

Championed by a broad bi-partisan coalition of 15 co-sponsors, and introduced by freshman Representative James Comer (R-KY), H.R. 3530 is strongly poised to reach a floor vote in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress. Vote Hemp anticipates a complementary bill to be introduced in the Senate in the near future.

In supplemental affirmation of Congressional support for the return of commercial hemp farming to the American agrarian landscape, Senator Michael F. Bennet (D-CO), introduced S. 1576, on July 18, 2017, which would ensure that farmers of industrial hemp crops would have equal access to water rights as those farmers growing other agricultural crops. A necessary measure to ensure the success of hemp crops around the country, this bill was introduced in response to the Bureau of Reclamation's recent efforts to deny water rights to a number of hemp farmers in Montana, Colorado and Oregon.

To date, thirty-three 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: Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wyoming.

# # #

*Vote Hemp is a national, single-issue, non-profit organization dedicated to the acceptance of and a free market for 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](http://www.VoteHemp.com).*