



Mar. 8, 2017

Dear Members of the House Natural Resources Committee:

On behalf of the Kenai Soil & Water Conservation District's Board of Supervisors, I am writing in support of House Bill 172, an act defining industrial hemp (IH) as an agricultural product in the State of Alaska and allowing for the commercial farming of hemp through a pilot project.

According to the 2015 Congressional Research Service report, *Hemp as an Agricultural Commodity*, annual sales of industrial hemp products in the U.S. are about \$580 million. Being the only developed nation that hasn't developed industrial hemp on a commercial scale, the U.S. imports virtually all of these products, with China and Canada being the top beneficiaries. Kenai Peninsula farmers are eager to explore the economic opportunities represented by this hardy, multi-purpose crop that can be used for food, forage, fiber and thousands of industrial uses. We know from Canada and from crop trials done decades ago in Alaska that industrial hemp can grow here.

Industrial hemp (IH) represents opportunity for farmers as well as for a host of subsidiary processing industries. IH insulation may help address problems with both affordable housing and the rising cost of energy in the state. The use of IH in home construction and insulation has the potential to significantly mitigate waste related to energy consumption, lower heating costs due to its high insulation value, and serve as a construction alternative for drywall, OSB plywood, house wrap, and fiberglass insulation. Additionally, IH fiber is a viable alternative to polypropylene products and chemical dispersants used in oil spills and other bioremediation efforts.

Each year, more states in our nation are opening the door to additional research and applications of industrial hemp by legalizing its commercial cultivation. We urge you to add Alaska to this ever-growing number and allow our farmers the ability to pursue hemp as a viable commercial product by supporting HB 172.

Sincerely,

Steve Albers
Chair, KSWCD Board of Supervisors