



Representative Harriet Drummond  
Sponsor Statement

House Bill 172 "Cultivation of Industrial Hemp"

House Bill 172 is an act to define hemp as an agricultural product in the State of Alaska and allow for the commercial farming of hemp through a pilot program. The definition of industrial hemp will be changed from a controlled substance to an agricultural product. The Department of Resources Division of Agriculture will administer the farming operations for the pilot program.

A new crop in Alaska will create a new demand for jobs in agriculture, transportation, and processing industry that will be accessible without the need for a post-secondary degree making a large pool for blue collar job seekers. Alaska has demand for many vocational and technical careers which are popular for young adults leaving high school. Allowing cultivation of industrial hemp would add to the pool of large vocational demand giving Alaskan high school graduates more opportunity for a vocational career.

The crop of hemp has been approved by state legislatures for cultivation in over half of the United States and has the capability to benefit nine different markets. Hemp products are used in textiles, farming, nutrition, furniture, paper products and construction materials. Hemp has had success in cultivation in Canada which makes it an attractive prospect for Alaska because of the similar climate. Hemp is an untapped market in the state and has the potential to have a positive economic impact on Alaska.

Industrial hemp is defined in section 7606 of the 2014 Farming Bill as the plant *Cannabis Sativa L*, the same plant which is commonly known as marijuana. The distinction between marijuana and hemp is the level of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) which is the psychoactive chemical in the plant is 0.3% or lower in hemp making impossible to have any psychoactive euphoria if consumed. Studies have shown intoxication from THC required a consumption threshold of 1% THC content, making the 0.3% well below the limit of inebriation.

As more and more states eliminate the prohibition on cannabis and Alaska being one of the early members of states that allow recreational marijuana use, the prospect of adding a crop to Alaska's agricultural industry will benefit the state's economy. Over half the United States are incorporating the pilot program outlined in the 2014 Farming Bill, and Alaska should be included as one of those states.