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Alaskan Senator Pushes for Hemp Legalization

By *Dave Carpenter* on January 24, 2015 @cannabisnow

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Parlaying the recent passing of Alaska's Ballot Measure 2, which legalized cannabis for recreational sale in the state, Democratic Senator Johnny Ellis has pre-filed a bill seeking to make hemp – marijuana's non-psychoactive sibling – the state's next agricultural cash crop.

According to [reports](#), "Ellis had been considering proposing an industrial hemp bill for several years and after seeing bipartisan support for hemp in the U.S. Congress' 2014 [Farm Bill](#), he decided to introduce legislation."

It's no surprise that [Alaska](#) is joining the discussion regarding [hemp](#) legalization, given the worldwide popularity of hemp products for everything from textiles and building materials to bio-plastics and auto parts. Countries from [Uruguay](#) to Romania have for many years been capitalizing on this rich natural resource.

Still, U.S. states face considerable hurdles when pursuing legalization due to hemp's misperception as a psychoactive substance, first misclassified in the Controlled Substances Act in

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1970, which placed hemp in the Schedule I drug category along with marijuana, heroin and LSD.

Says Brandon Emmett, executive director of [Coalition for Responsible Cannabis Legislation](#) (CRCL), “Given the evidence showing that hemp cannot be consumed to achieve a recreational high, any moral imperative for its prohibition has been removed.”

Regarding hemp [cultivation](#) in Alaska's cold climate and short growing season, Emmett believes that will not be an impediment to growth of the industry in the state.

“Hemp is an annual plant that experiences explosive growth given the right conditions. Alaska's long summer days allow annual plants to grow almost continuously so long as temperatures remain relatively warm. In good summers Alaskan farmers would be able to produce bumper crops of massive plants.”

Cannabis cultivators Giono and James Barrett, brothers and co-founders of [Rainforest Farms](#) in Juneau, support bill SB-8 and hope to one day build their farm's homestead as a zero-energy hemp-built structure.

“We strongly believe in protecting our civil liberties in Alaska,” says James Barrett, also the acting regional director at CRCL. “Working with farmers of all types and being directly involved with the Coalition for Responsible Cannabis Legislation has been very important to ensure that our system is fair for the interests of those locally, as well as throughout the entire state of Alaska.”

Giono Barrett adds, “SB-8 will make the vision of sustainability here in Southeast Alaska more practical and cost effective, with materials that can withstand our wild climate and seem to last forever, produced right here in our state.”

CRCL sees the bill being passed during the current legislative session.

“Alaska supported legalization of recreational marijuana by a margin of 6.5 percent,” says Emmett. “The bill seems to be a common sense approach to agricultural options for Alaska.”

Do you think hemp should be legal? Tell us in the comments.

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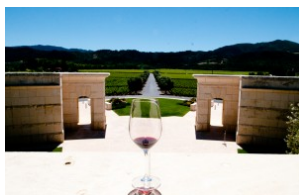
Dave Carpenter is the managing editor of Cannabis Now Magazine. He's passionate about normalizing the use of cannabis as medicine for the ill and advancing the plant into free markets, treating it no differently than any other commodity with the potential to drive widespread economic growth. He's happy to see the herb finally getting the respect it deserves.

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