

Alaska State Legislature

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Senator Shelley Hughes

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SB 6 Alaska Grown Industrial Hemp Act

Sponsor Statement

Senate Bill 6 is an act defining hemp as an agricultural product in the state of Alaska, allowing for the commercial farming of hemp in the state of Alaska, instructing the Department of Resource's Division of Agriculture to develop a registry of hemp farming operations in Alaska and allowing for a pilot program on industrial hemp. This bill also removes industrial hemp from the state of Alaska's list of controlled substances.

Industrial hemp has been grown in the United States since the first European settlers arrived in the early 1600's. The Declaration of Independence was drafted on hemp paper and even founding fathers George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams grew hemp and advocated for its commercial productions. Industrial hemp was a staple crop of the 19th century American farmer. In Alaska, there are references to the growing of hemp in the early 20th century.

Industrial hemp is defined as the plant *Cannabis Sativa L*, the same plant as what is commonly referred to as marijuana, but with a THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) level of 0.3% or lower. THC is the intoxicant component of the *Cannabis Sativa L* plant, and numerous scientific studies have shown the intoxication threshold as 1%. Thus the definition of hemp in this bill is well below the levels needed to gain intoxication. This definition of hemp is in accordance with the definition given by the federal government in the 2014 Farm Bill. In 2016 a key provision of the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2016 was added by Senator McConnell that now allows for the transportation, processing and sale of hemp from the Farm Bill 2014 compliant programs.

The commercial possibilities of hemp are numerous and versatile. Hemp can be used for fiber products such as clothing and paper. It can be used for building materials and insulation; farmers have used it for animal feed; and hemp oil continues to be researched for its medical possibilities including treatment for those suffering from epilepsy and other diseases.

Each year more states in our nation are opening up the possibilities to additional research and application of commercial hemp by legalizing its commercial growth. Currently there are thirty states that have passed legislation related to industrial hemp. I urge your support to add Alaska to this ever growing number and allow our farmers the ability to pursue hemp as a viable commercial product.

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