

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE

February 22, 2017

1:58 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator John Coghill, Chair
Senator Mia Costello
Senator Kevin Meyer
Senator Pete Kelly

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Bill Wielechowski

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 6

"An Act relating to industrial hemp; and relating to controlled substances."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 20

"An Act classifying U-47700 as a schedule IA controlled substance; and providing for an effective date."

- ITEM REMOVED FROM AGENDA

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 6

SHORT TITLE: INDUSTRIAL HEMP PRODUCTION

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) HUGHES

01/09/17	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/17
01/18/17	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/18/17	(S)	RES, JUD
02/08/17	(S)	RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/08/17	(S)	Heard & Held
02/08/17	(S)	MINUTE(RES)
02/13/17	(S)	RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/13/17	(S)	Heard & Held
02/13/17	(S)	MINUTE(RES)

02/15/17 (S) RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/15/17 (S) Moved CSSB 6(RES) Out of Committee
02/15/17 (S) MINUTE(RES)
02/17/17 (S) RES RPT CS 5DP 1NR NEW TITLE
02/17/17 (S) DP: GIESSEL, HUGHES, COGHILL, VON
IMHOF, MEYER
02/17/17 (S) NR: STEDMAN
02/17/17 (S) FIN REFERRAL ADDED AFTER JUD
02/20/17 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/20/17 (S) Heard & Held
02/20/17 (S) MINUTE(JUD)
02/22/17 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

KAREN BERGER, representing herself
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 6.

JACK BENNETT, representing himself
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 6.

DON HART, representing himself
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Suggested an amendment to SB 6.

KEN RAY, representing himself
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 6.

FRANK TURNEY, representing himself
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 6.

EMBER HAYNES
Denali Hemp Company
Talkeetna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 6.

DAVID OTNESS, representing himself
Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 6.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:58:24 PM](#)

CHAIR JOHN COGHILL called the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:58 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Meyer, Costello, and Chair Coghill. Senator Kelly arrived soon thereafter.

SB 6-INDUSTRIAL HEMP PRODUCTION

[1:58:49 PM](#)

CHAIR COGHILL announced the consideration of SB 6 and stated the intent is to take public testimony.

[1:59:05 PM](#)

SENATOR KELLY joined the committee.

[2:01:34 PM](#)

KAREN BERGER, representing herself, Homer, Alaska, testified that she is a proponent of industrial hemp. It is a viable product that is good for agriculture, the economy, and dietary needs.

[2:02:30 PM](#)

JACK BENNETT, representing himself, Homer, Alaska, testified in support of SB 6. He encouraged committee members to google his name followed by hemp to learn about his team's efforts on sustainable building. He described presentations he has given throughout Alaska on sustainable building and an oil spill recovery product that replaces polypropylene technologies. He noted that he has also given presentations to the Environmental Protection Agency and military emergency prevention teams. He highlighted that his bosses' company processes plant-based material that helps fluid engineers drill faster, lighter, and cheaper. He noted that last summer the state of Oklahoma purchased 100 million pounds of hemp for their oil reclamation technologies.

He emphasized that industrial hemp is not a marijuana product. It contains just trace amounts of THC but the CannaBiDial or CBD oil derived from hemp has profound medicinal purposes.

CHAIR COGHILL said your enthusiasm is noted.

[2:06:16 PM](#)

DON HART, representing himself, Wasilla, Alaska, said his testimony on SB 6 relates to the definitions in AS 11.71.900(14) and AS 17.38.900(10). He requested the committee remove hemp

entirely from AS 17.38 because despite the exemption, it would be open to interpretation whether hemp would be subject to regulation as marijuana. He also pointed out that the definition in AS 11.71.900(14) conflicts with AS 17.38.900(10).

MR. HART also pointed out that if the university were to take this as a pilot program it would qualify for federal funding. He noted the university already has a pilot program for marijuana and with the combination, the governor could declare the entire state a study area for the cannabis industry. He listed the areas that hemp could be used including building materials, automobile parts, and safety vests. He concluded, "The idea is you have a tremendous amount of economic opportunity here."

2:12:02 PM

KEN RAY, representing himself, Wasilla, Alaska, testified in support of SB 6. He has been a horticulturist in Alaska for 40 years and he believes that legalizing industrial hemp is a good idea. He said that regulation should be kept to a minimum, but crop inspection should be required to ensure that the plants have not cross pollinated with marijuana. This could potentially raise the THC level above the threshold. If the hemp has too much THC, the crop should be destroyed, and the owner should bear the cost. He opined that hemp fields should be posted "so the growers can protect each other from this cross pollinization."

He reported that in 1916 the Alaska Experiment Station grew hemp in Rampart and posted the results. He noted that hemp seed currently is sold in retail stores in Alaska and he would suggest there is an economic opportunity for seed production for livestock feed. He said home gardeners may also want to grow hemp and they too should be subject to the registration process.

2:17:19 PM

FRANK TURNEY, representing himself, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified in support of SB 6. He mentioned the versatility of the hemp plant and noted that over 25,000 products are made from its fiber and oil. He stated his preference to have the pilot project run by farmers rather than the university. He suggested the sponsor or committee look into how to transport hemp seeds to Alaska because it might be difficult due to federal restrictions.

CHAIR COGHILL said that is part of the discussion, and the pilot project is not limited to one entity.

MR. TURNEY expressed hope that hemp be given a chance. It has economic opportunity and is the fastest growing biomass on earth. He can testify that it will grow in Alaska.

2:20:04 PM

EMBER HAYNES, Denali Hemp Company, Talkeetna, Alaska, testified in support of SB 6. She said she and her husband have been importing hemp oil and hemp seed to make natural products for their store and they look forward to being able to grow their own. She said her testimony comes from the heart and her personal use. She voiced support for the pilot program focusing on both large and small acreages. She opined that being able to grow hemp fits into the sustainable lifestyle of Alaskans. She listed the ways that hemp can be used as a food/protein source including hemp milk, hemp flour, and sprouted hemp seeds for microgreens. She expressed hope that the bill would move from committee.

CHAIR COGHILL said it is not his intention to impede the progress of the bill.

2:23:53 PM

DAVID OTNESS, representing himself, Cordova, Alaska, testified in support of SB 6. He expressed support for coming out of the dark ages and being pragmatic about viable crops in Alaska. This is an opportunity to diversify the economy and remove the stigma of 1933 laws from industrial hemp. He discussed the gardening page he and a friend started two years ago and the interest they have stimulated in the community of Eyak to grow food for both Cordova and four other communities around Prince William Sound. He agreed with previous testimony that the industrial opportunities for hemp seem to be endless. He listed the products hemp is used for including automobile panels, insulation, and building blocks.

He questioned the assertion that there would be a problem with cross pollination with marijuana. His understanding is that serious marijuana growers hand pollinate their crop within a confined space. He voiced support for keeping regulations to a minimum and suggested placing the pilot program under the Cooperative Extension Service.

2:29:23 PM

CHAIR COGHILL stated that the committee is working on a committee substitute to protect a farmer whose hemp crop tests a little over the upper THC limit.

He held SB 6 in committee awaiting a committee substitute and kept public testimony open.

2:32:22 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Coghill adjourned the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting at 2:32 p.m.