

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE GROWTH AND PROCESSING OF NEBRASKA HEMP

Passed by SCC - November 14, 2017

WHEREAS, *Family farms, ranches, businesses and rural communities endure declining incomes and populations as the youth depart, leaving schools, even post offices, to face closure while property taxes, production costs and living expenses increase; and*

WHEREAS, *Hemp is a fiber and oilseed crop with a wide variety of uses, including, but not limited to, twine, rope, cloth, paper, food, seed, construction materials, automotive components carpeting, and medicinal applications, and has potential for use as a cellulose ethanol bio fuel; and*

WHEREAS, *Hemp seeds have been used in making birdseed, industrial oils, soaps, cosmetics, medicines, and food; and*

WHEREAS, *Hemp and marijuana are genetically different cultivars of the same plant species and are scientifically distinguishable from each other in composition, appearance, and effect; and*

WHEREAS, *Hemp can be grown for scientific, economic, and environmental uses while growth and possession of marijuana remains prohibited under federal and state statutes¹; and*

WHEREAS, *Hemp crops can benefit the soil with less pollution to air and water consistent with traditional Nebraska principles of conservation and stewardship²; and*

WHEREAS, *Research shows developments related to hemp have the potential to provide a cash crop³ for Nebraska farmers with broad commercial applications that will enhance the economic diversity, growth and stability of our state's agricultural industry, retail outlets and urban services;*

WHEREAS, *The National Farmers Union, the Nebraska Farmers Union, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and the Nebraska Farm Bureau support the removal of restrictions from the growth, cultivation and processing of industrial hemp; and*

WHEREAS, *Two bills pending in Congress, S. 154 and H.R. 525⁴, each with significant bipartisan support, would remove industrial hemp from the federal Controlled Substances Act and Congress has denied funding to the Justice Department, including the Drug Enforcement Agency, for use "...in contravention of section 7606 of the 2014 Farm Bill."*⁵

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED *that the Nebraska Democrats support the removal of state⁶ and federal restrictions on natural hemp qualifying as industrial hemp and urge elected representatives accomplish that removal on the state and federal level.*

SIGNED:

Gage County Democrats

ENDNOTES

1. In 2014, through the efforts of Senator Norm Wallman, the Nebraska Legislature enacted LB 1001 (39-2-8) which allowed industrial hemp to be grown and cultivated for research by a post-secondary institution or the Nebraska Department of Agriculture as allowed by §7606 of the federal Farm Bill of 2014. Twenty-five (25) other states have defined industrial hemp separately from marijuana. Hemp crops were grown lawfully in nine states during 2015. More are planting this year, despite a world-wide shortage of seed. Kentucky has licensed over 4,500 acres for hemp planting this spring.

Industrial hemp is now defined in Nebraska Statute §2-5701(4)(b) as, “*...the plant Cannabis sativa L. and any part of such plant, whether growing or not, with a delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol concentration of not more than three-tenths percent on a dry weight basis.*” Much like sweet corn differs from field corn, hemp differs from “marijuana” in genetic and chemical composition; by appearance and use. Ingestion of industrial hemp, as so defined, would not impair or alter perception, coordination, nor judgment. It would not be addictive or toxic. The Nebraska Department of Agriculture developed regulations for research programs on the growth and cultivation of hemp. Unfortunately these regulations suppress, rather than promote, the research and development of hemp and its products.

2. Hemp grows without the use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers requiring fewer machine trips across the field. Planted and harvested, a hemp crop saves time, equipment maintenance and fuel costs; its short season would allow for additional cropping. Hemp requires half the water of most field crops and is excellent for dry-land farming, growing without irrigation throughout much of Nebraska. Hemp growth cleanses the air, water and soil and leaves behind a field of suppressed weed growth, loosen soil and repleted nitrogen.

3. Despite climate and soil limitations Canadian growers report gross annual profits of \$250 to \$400 per acre. Some growers experience gross annual profits as high as \$1,000 per acre.

4. S. 134 in the Senate has 13 Cosponsors who include the Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Rand Paul and Bernie Sanders. In the House HR 525 has 68 Cosponsors, Both bills have bipartisan support but none from the Nebraska congressional delegation.

5. Section 763 of the federal Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2016 also precludes use of federal funding to prohibit the “...transportation, processing, sale, or use of industrial hemp...” grown under a state authorized program.

6. The Nebraska Department of Agriculture, with the Governor and Attorney General's approval, imposed regulations that have suppressed industrial hemp, limiting research to Universities and colleges who own or lease all property,

including the vehicles, used in any pilot program. This prevents any public-private enterprise or research by individuals acting under the Department's license. Rules have other limitations as well. The University of Nebraska in Lincoln obtained DEA permit for the first time in mid-May and hopes to plant 2 acres if seed from Canada arrives.