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**Congress Introduces Industrial Hemp Farming Act with Bi-partisan Support**

***S. 134 and H.R. 525 Would Remove Federal Restrictions on Industrial Hemp Farming in the U.S. and Allow States to Regulate the Crop***

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Vote Hemp, the nation’s leading grassroots hemp advocacy organization working to change state and federal laws to allow commercial hemp farming, is pleased to announce the introduction of complementary bills in both the Senate and House, S. 134 and H.R. 525, The Industrial Hemp Farming Act of 2015. If passed, this bill would remove federal restrictions on the cultivation of industrial hemp, the non-drug oilseed and fiber varieties of *Cannabis*. The full text of the bill may be found at: <http://votehemp.com/federal-industrial-hemp-legislation.html>.

“With bi-partisan support in the Senate and House, we are eager to see 2015 be the year Congress finally passes comprehensive legislation to legalize industrial hemp farming,” said Eric Steenstra, President of Vote Hemp. “Historic progress has been made on the issue this past year, as farmers in Vermont, Colorado and Kentucky planted hemp in 2014 thanks to Sec. 7606 of the Farm Bill, which allowed states that have legalized the crop to grow research and pilot hemp crops.”

S. 134 was introduced January 8, 2015, by Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR), Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), and Rand Paul (R-KY). H.R. 525 was introduced January 21, 2015, by Representatives Thomas Massie (R-KY), and Jared Polis (D-CO).

“I’ve heard from countless Kentuckians about the success of our initial 2014 industrial hemp pilot programs and university studies in the Commonwealth,” said Senator McConnell. “I am especially proud that Representative Massie and I were able to work together in making those projects possible on the federal level via the 2014 Farm Bill. I support this legislation and look forward to seeing industrial hemp prosper in the Commonwealth.”

“I’m excited to join with Representative Massie to introduce common-sense, bipartisan legislation that will once again allow American farmers to benefit from industrial hemp,” said Representative Jared Polis. “The federal ban on hemp has been a waste of taxpayer dollars that ignores science, suppresses innovation, and subverts the will of states that have chosen to incorporate this versatile crop into their economies. I am hopeful that Congress will build on last year’s progress on hemp research and pilot programs by passing the Industrial Hemp Farming Act to allow this historical American crop to once again thrive on our farmlands.”

"Because of outdated federal drug laws, our farmers can't grow industrial hemp and take advantage of a more than \$500 million market. We rely on imports to sustain consumer demand. It makes no sense," said Representative Blumenauer. "Our fear of industrial hemp is misplaced – it is not a drug. It is time to pass the Industrial Hemp Farming Act and allow American farmers to cultivate this crop."

"My vision for the farmers and manufacturers of Kentucky is to see us start growing hemp, creating jobs and leading the nation in this industry again. Allowing farmers throughout our nation to cultivate industrial hemp and benefit from its many uses will boost our economy and bring much-needed jobs to the agriculture industry," Senator Paul said.

H.R. 525 was introduced with a record-setting number of 47 cosponsors for a federal hemp legalization bill, including Amash (R-MI), Barr (R-KY), Blumenauer (D-OR), Bonamici (D-OR), Buck (R-CO), Cartwright (D-PA), Clay (D-MO), Cohen (D-TN), Cramer (R-ND), DeFazio (D-OR), DeGette (D-CO), DeLauro (D-CT), DelBene (D-WA), Ellison (D-MN), Farr (D-CA), Gabbard (D-HI), Grijalva (D-AZ), Hanna (R-NY), Holmes-Norton (D-DC), Honda (D-CA), Labrador (R-ID), Lee (D-CA), Lofgren (D-CA), McClintock (R-CA), McCollum (D-MN), McDermott (D-WA), Mulvaney (R-SC), Nadler (D-NY), O'Rourke (D-TX), Perry (R-PA), Peterson (D-MN), Pingree (D-ME), Pocan (D-WI), Polis (D-CO), Rohrabacher (R-CA), Ryan (D-OH), Schakowsky (D-IL), Schrader (D-OR), Stivers (R-OH), Young (R-IN), Walz (D-MN), Welch (D-VT), Yarmuth (D-KY), Yoho (R-FL), Young (R-IN), Young (R-AK), and Zinke (R-MT).

To date, twenty-one states have defined industrial hemp as distinct and removed barriers to its production. These states are able to take immediate advantage of the industrial hemp research and pilot program provision, Section 7606 of the Farm Bill: California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New York, North Dakota, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia. In 2014, three states, Colorado, Kentucky, and Vermont, planted hemp research crops.

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*Vote Hemp is a national, single-issue, non-profit organization dedicated to the acceptance of and a free market for low-THC industrial hemp and to changes in current law to allow U.S. farmers to once again grow the agricultural crop. More information about hemp legislation and the crop's many uses may be found at [www.VoteHemp.com](http://www.VoteHemp.com) or [www.TheHIA.org](http://www.TheHIA.org). Video footage of hemp farming in other countries is available upon request by contacting Lauren Stansbury at 402.540.1208 or [lauren@votehemp.com](mailto:lauren@votehemp.com).*