

We hereby petition the General Assembly and Governor Terry McAuliffe to pass the Virginia Industrial Hemp Farming Act of 2015

WHEREAS, the industrial hemp industry is enjoying a significant and growing revitalization worldwide, as faltering agricultural economies in a number of states create pressure to investigate alternative crops, including industrial hemp; and

WHEREAS, industrial hemp’s three raw materials – fiber, hurds and seeds -- can be used in more than 25,000 products, including textiles, rope, plastics, resin, particle board, “hempcrete,” paper products, soaps and shampoo, skin care products, biodiesel, and vitamins and oil, among others; and

WHEREAS, the histories of the United States and Virginia are replete with examples of the utility of and dependence on industrial hemp, which was legally cultivated in the First Colony of Virginia and throughout many other states from 1619 until the late 1930’s; and

WHEREAS, although industrial hemp is derived from the Cannabis Sativa plant, it is distinctive from its relative, marijuana, in that hemp contains less than one percent of the psychoactive chemical THC; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia General Assembly in 1999 urged the federal government to revise the necessary regulations so as to permit the controlled experimental cultivation of industrial hemp in the Commonwealth of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the National Farmers Union has urged the President, the Attorney General, and Congress to direct the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) to differentiate between industrial hemp and marijuana and adopt a policy to allow American farmers to grow industrial hemp under state law without requiring DEA licenses; and

WHEREAS, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture supports revisions of the federal rules and regulations authorizing commercial production of industrial hemp and has urged the DEA to develop and adopt an official definition of industrial hemp that comports with definitions currently used by countries producing industrial hemp; and

WHEREAS, the National Farmers Union made the official statement, “Urging the president, attorney general and Congress to direct the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to reclassify industrial hemp as a non-controlled substance and adopt policy to allow American farmers to grow industrial hemp under state law without affecting eligibility for USDA benefits.”; and

WHEREAS, the American Farm Bureau Federation made the official policy statement, “We support the declassification of industrial hemp as a controlled substance because of the opportunity that it provides some farmers to diversify their operations and share in a new market opportunity”; and

WHEREAS, the Industrial Hemp Farming Act of 2013 (House Resolution 525 and Senate Bill 359) was introduced in the 113th Congress with the intention of removing Industrial Hemp as a Schedule I controlled substance under the Controlled Substance Act and allowing the State Legislatures to license and regulate the commercial production of hemp as an industrial and agricultural commodity; and

WHEREAS, the United States 113th Congress and President Barack Obama signed into law the Agriculture Act of 2014 which contains a provision for Universities and State Agriculture Departments in States that have legalized hemp farming to begin growing this useful crop for research purposes (Sec. 7606 Legitimacy of industrial hemp research); and

WHEREAS, Delegate Joseph Yost introduced House Bill 1277 to the 2015 General Assembly session also known as the ‘Virginia Industrial Hemp Farming Act of 2015’ to allow for the licensed cultivation of industrial hemp, to the extent permitted by federal law. The bill directs the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to adopt relevant regulations and establishes an industrial hemp research program; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Industrial Hemp Coalition received over 1,000 signatures from citizens of Virginia that sponsor this petition and have come to Richmond to present on their behalf January 19th, 2015.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia, we hereby petition the General Assembly and Governor Terry McAuliffe to pass the Virginia Industrial Hemp Farming Act of 2015 that will license and regulate the production of industrial hemp as an industrial and agricultural commodity which in turn will create new jobs and will open a diverse market for farmers, Universities, businesses and entrepreneurs in the emerging and fast growing United States hemp industry.