

Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce the Industrial Hemp Farming Act. The Industrial Hemp Farming Act requires the federal government to respect state laws allowing the growing of industrial hemp.

Nine States--Hawaii, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, Vermont, and West Virginia--allow industrial hemp production or research in accord with state laws. However, federal law is standing in the way of farmers in these states growing what may be a very profitable crop. Because of current federal law, all hemp included in products sold in the United States must be imported instead of being grown by American farmers.

Since 1970, the federal Controlled Substances Act's inclusion of industrial hemp in the schedule one definition of marijuana has prohibited American farmers from growing industrial hemp despite the fact that industrial hemp has such a low content of THC (the psychoactive chemical in the related marijuana plant) that nobody can be psychologically affected by consuming hemp. Federal law concedes the safety of industrial hemp by allowing it to be legally imported for use as food.

The United States is the only industrialized nation that prohibits industrial hemp cultivation. The Congressional Research Service has noted that hemp is grown as an established agricultural commodity in approximately 30 nations in Europe, Asia, North America, and South America. The Industrial Hemp Farming Act will relieve this unique restriction on American farmers and allow them to grow industrial hemp in accord with state law.

Industrial hemp is a crop that was grown legally throughout the United States for most of our nation's history. In fact, during World War II, the federal government actively encouraged American farmers to grow industrial hemp to help the war effort. The Department of Agriculture even produced a film "Hemp for Victory" encouraging the plant's cultivation.

In recent years, the hemp plant has been put to many popular uses in foods and in industry. Grocery stores sell hemp seeds and oil as well as food products containing oil and seeds from the hemp plant. Industrial hemp is also included in consumer products such as paper, cloths, cosmetics, carpet, and door frames of cars. Hemp has even been used in alternative automobile fuel.

It is unfortunate that the federal government has stood in the way of American farmers competing in the global industrial hemp market. Indeed, the founders of our nation, some of whom grew hemp, would surely find that federal restrictions on farmers growing a safe and profitable crop on their own land are inconsistent with the constitutional guarantee of a limited, restrained federal government. Therefore, I urge my colleagues to stand up for American farmers and cosponsor the Industrial Hemp Farming Act.