

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5012

As of January 13, 2015

Title: An act relating to authorizing the growing of industrial hemp.

Brief Description: Authorizing the growing of industrial hemp.

Sponsors: Senators Hatfield, Honeyford, Rolfes, Ericksen, Kohl-Welles, Hasegawa, Chase and Hobbs.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water & Rural Economic Development: 1/13/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: Industrial hemp production is not pursued in Washington to any significant extent at this time. The fact that hemp contains tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which is a controlled substance on the federal level and a regulated substance on the state level, complicates its feasibility as a farm product. Under state law, I-502 legalized the possession of marijuana and authorized the state Liquor Control Board to regulate and tax marijuana for persons 21 years of age and older. The definition of marijuana falling under I-502 requires a THC percentage of 0.3 percent or more by weight.

Products made from hemp can include cloth, fuel, plastics, seed meal, and seed oil for consumption, among other things. Besides being grown as a raw material, hemp can also be used directly for erosion control and as a cover crop.

Summary of Bill: Industrial hemp is defined as the plant, cannabis sativa, with a THC level at or below 0.3 percent by weight with an exception for licensed seed research.

Subject to receiving federal or private funds for this purpose, Washington State University (WSU) must study the feasibility and desirability of industrial hemp production in Washington State. The study's sources of information are prescribed and specific analyses are required. WSU must report its findings to the Legislature by January 14, 2016.

Appropriation: None.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This is common sense legislation to make the non-drug version, hemp, a legal crop to grow here as it is in Canada, other countries, and states. The less said the better in legislation. The State Patrol has suggested changes. The federal government has given us a path to promote the success of this industry. Without regulation, we will have failed crops and will not be taken seriously in the marketplace. Simple regulations like Kentucky's would suffice. The cross-pollination problem with the psychoactive form of cannabis must be dealt with by regulation. Hemp paper lasts over 100 years while pulp paper lasts only 50 years. Anything made of plastic or fiber can be made with hemp and is ultimately biodegradable.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Hatfield, prime sponsor; Joy Beckerman Maher, Jedidiah Haney, President, WA State Chapter of the Hemp Industries Assn.; Jeff Gilmore, jd lcc; Pat Rasmussen, Ezra Eickmeyer, Arthur West, citizens.