

985663480

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 94

House Amendments in [] — January 25, 1999

Memorializing the United States Secretary of Agriculture, the Director of the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy to permit the controlled, experimental cultivation of industrial hemp in Virginia.

Patrons—Van Yahres, Bloxom, Murphy and Wardrup; Senators: Whipple and Woods

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, faltering state agricultural economies have created pressure to investigate alternative crops; and

WHEREAS, the 1996 Farm Bill reduces government subsidies over the next seven years, pushing farmers to examine alternative cash crops; and

WHEREAS, increased foreign competition in established markets, such as tobacco, as well as innovative work with industrial hemp by Canada and the European community, has prompted increased interest in the economic viability of industrial hemp; and

WHEREAS, similar to jute and flax, industrial hemp's three principal raw materials—fiber, hurds, and seeds—are used to produce textiles, rope, cellulose plastics, resin, particle board, paper products, and oil; and

WHEREAS, scarce fiber supplies for the textile paper industries have caused rising prices, creating heightened interest in a plentiful domestic source for alternative fibers; 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 Virginia and in many other states until the late 1930s; and

WHEREAS, recently the industry has experienced a revitalization, with worldwide hemp sales of \$5 million in 1993 and increasing to \$75 million in 1995; and

WHEREAS, the American Farm Bureau Federation, representing 4.6 million farmers, passed a unanimous resolution urging research into "the viability and economic potential" of hemp; and

WHEREAS, although industrial hemp is derived from the cannabis sativa plant, it is distinctive from its better known relative, in that it contains less than one percent of the chemical responsible for its psychoactive properties; and

WHEREAS, the growing of industrial hemp in the United States is allowed only by federal permit, and the conditions of such a permit are so restrictive as to make the experimental cultivation of hemp, even under the auspices of a state university with strict controls, essentially impossible; and

WHEREAS, the United States Drug Enforcement Administration correctly states that it has never turned down an application for the experimental cultivation of hemp, but it is equally true that no successful applicant has ever cultivated hemp, due to the excessive restrictions placed on the required permit; and

WHEREAS, determining the economic viability of the commercial cultivation and use of industrial hemp in Virginia clearly requires experimental cultivation of the crop, under carefully controlled conditions, by a university-affiliated agricultural research station; [and

WHEREAS, a national organization has been formed to (i) provide information on opportunities, benefits, and obstacles to the recommercialization of industrial hemp; (ii) broaden the base of support within the agricultural and manufacturing communities, academia, and among the public; and (iii) promote research and development of industrial hemp and the recommercialization of the crop in the United States;] now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the appropriate federal agencies and officials be urged to revise the necessary regulations so as to permit the controlled, experimental cultivation of industrial hemp in Virginia; and, be it

[RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Commonwealth may become a member of the North American Industrial Hemp Council, Inc. (NAIHC); and, be it]

RESOLVED [~~FURTHER~~ FINALLY] , That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit copies of this resolution to the United States Secretary of Agriculture, the Director of the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia.

ENGROSSED

HJ94E