

March 7, 2016

To: Mark Hutton, chairman

House Commerce Committee; and committee members

Re: Testimony in support for HB 2634

Chairman Hutton,

I'm pleased to forward to you my support for HB 2634, which would legalize Industrial Hemp in Kansas.

Recently, Garnett saw the closing of its Taylor Forge heavy steel fabricating plant after some 40 years of operation. A handful of its 28 jobs were transferred to Paola, but most were lost. That's a big hit for a town of 3,000 people.

I opined in an editorial that if Kansas had kept pace with Kentucky and other states, we might have already had a hemp processing plant that could have absorbed some of those jobs. Because Kansas maintains Industrial Hemp as illegal, we miss not just that opportunity but also millions of dollars in revenues and payrolls that could come from the legal growing and processing of what is truly a "wonder plant."

First and foremost: Hemp ain't pot. You'll hear from other people better versed in the botanical evidence than me as to why. What hemp is is \$500 million a year in domestic product sales alone-heretofore all imported from foreign countries where growing it and processing it is legal. The 2014 U.S. Farm Bill authorizes it, and competing states which have approved it have already jumped on the bandwagon.

Industrial Hemp can't get you high, but it can get you rich.

Kansas farmers should be able to grow hemp and make money, and the state's investors and entrepreneurs should be able to build the facilities to process it into materials for medicines, building materials and healthy foods and become players in the market before other states fill the void.

Please stamp HB 2634 with your approval, and let's make hemp a cash crop in Kansas.

Sincerely, Dane Hicks, Publisher

## Kansas needs hemp as cash crop option

What if, when the Taylor Forge metal fabrication plant in Garnett shuts down this month as previously announced and puts an end to 28 local jobs, its former employees were able to drive across town to find comparable employment at a local plant that processes locally-grown indus-

trial hemp?

And what if, in addition to rotations of corn and wheat and soybeans, farmers in Anderson and other Kansas counties had the option to grow highly-profitable industrial hemp to sell to that local processor?

And what if, a local company similar to the one that formed the East Kansas Agri Energy ethanol plant in Garnett owned that processing facility, made excellent profits selling processed hemp fiber, oil and seeds to treat cancer and brain seizures and to use in place of plastics and cotton in a huge range of products and healthier foods? And what if that company paid dividends, as EKAE has done, to its local investors?

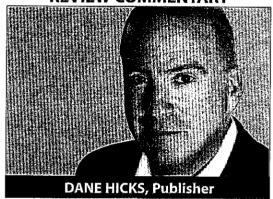
Hemp would be cool in Kansas, that's

But right now, too many people in Kansas think industrial hemp is marijuana, and that misunderstanding among lawmakers and the public makes hemp growing and processing illegal in our state. That misunderstanding means we're losing money and economic vitality to other states that are better educated and more aggressive.

Hemp products sold in the U.S. right now - most all made from plants grown in foreign countries – are raking in \$500 million a year in U.S. sales – and our farmers who could grow the plant in Kansas aren't making a dime of it.

Hemp ain't pot. It's similar in physical makeup, but it has a THC content of 0.3 percent or less - you could smoke a bale of it and never get high. It's known in illegal drug circles as "Hippies' Disappointment."

The State of Kentucky gets it. Since our culture has moved toward heel and **REVIEW COMMENTARY** 



hiding cigarette smokers to the barn door, demand for tobacco - a former cash crop in Kentucky - has dropped to the point many farmers have left farming altogether. But the state agriculture department is pursuing hemp as a replacement for tobacco under a special provision of the new U.S. Farm Bill, and Kentucky is well ahead of other states in developing this futuristic

Kansas can get there, but our Legislature needs to act this session. Rep. Willie Dove from Bonner Springs has a bill that would authorize the Kansas Department of Agriculture to license industrial hemp growing in the Sunflower State and get the year: industry kicked off here as a new option the k for farmers and an investment opportuni- the r ty for entrepreneurs. It's the same track prope Kentucky took to start developing the industry there.

The closing of Taylor Forge in Garnett drives home the importance of having job options in our communities. Kansas' economy as a whole needs the opportunities hemp provides.

Our small towns have gotten too used the g to bad economic news. Kansas legislators mout should legalize hemp to give us another toke option to grow prosperity.

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