

Comments on Bill No. 31-0100
An act amending title 7 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 1,
To allow for the cultivation of Hemp and other related purposes
June 4, 2015

Good Afternoon, Members of the Economic Development, Agriculture and Planning Committee:

Senator Janette Millin Young, Chair
Senator Novelle Francis Jr., Vice Chair
Senator Neville James
Senator Myron Jackson
Senator Kurt Vialet
Senator Clifford Graham
Senator Tregenza Roach
Senator Almando Liburd
Senator Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly

Other Senators present

Persons in the viewing and listening audience

Thanks for the opportunity to appear before you this afternoon to provide input on the proposed Bill no. 31-0100, an act amending title 7 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 1, to allow for the cultivation of Hemp and other related purposes.

First let me introduce my colleague, Mr. Stafford Crossman, who is here with me today. Mr. Crossman currently serves as the Assistant Director for the Agriculture and Natural Resources Program at the UVI Cooperative Extension Service. His training is in Plant and Soil Science.

On February 7, 2014, President Obama signed the U.S. Farm Bill of 2013 into law.
SEC. 7606. LEGITIMACY OF INDUSTRIAL HEMP RESEARCH, states;

(a) In General - Notwithstanding the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 801 et seq.), the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (20 U.S.C. 7101 et seq.), chapter 81 of title 41, United States Code, or any other Federal law, an institution of higher education (as defined in section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001)) or a State department of agriculture may grow or cultivate industrial hemp if--

- (1) the industrial hemp is grown or cultivated for purposes of research conducted under an agricultural pilot program or other agricultural or academic research; and
- (2) the growing or cultivating of industrial hemp is allowed under the laws of the State in which such institution of higher education or State department of agriculture is located and such research occurs.

(b) Definitions- In this section of the Farm Bill:

(1) AGRICULTURAL PILOT PROGRAM - The term 'agricultural pilot program' means a pilot program to study the growth, cultivation, or marketing of industrial hemp—

(A) in States that permit the growth or cultivation of industrial hemp under the laws of the State; and

(B) in a manner that--

i) ensures that only institutions of higher education and State departments of agriculture are used to grow or cultivate industrial hemp;

(ii) requires that sites used for growing or cultivating industrial hemp in a State be certified by, and registered with, the State department of agriculture; and

(iii) authorizes State departments of agriculture to promulgate regulations to carry out the pilot program in the States in accordance with the purposes of this section.

(2) INDUSTRIAL HEMP - The term 'industrial hemp' means the plant *Cannabis sativa L.* and any part of such plant, whether growing or not, with a delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) concentration of not more than 0.3 percent on a dry weight basis.

(3) STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE - The term 'State department of agriculture' means the agency, commission, or department of a State government responsible for agriculture within the State.

Some important reference points:

1. Basically, industrial hemp (*Cannabis sativa*) has no value as a recreational drug because of its low THC concentration.
2. It can be grown for fiber, seed, or oil.
3. Currently all hemp products sold in the U.S. are imported or manufactured from imported hemp.
4. Commercial hemp production ceased throughout North America in the late 1950s but there is presently renewed interest in growing this crop. Section 7606 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (the federal farm bill) authorized state departments of agriculture in states that have legalized hemp to develop "Pilot Programs" for industrial hemp research.
5. The states that currently have laws permitting the growth or cultivation of industrial hemp legal include California, Colorado, Hawaii, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia.

6. Passage of bill 31-0100 can allow the Virgin Islands to be added to this list of states that have adopted a Pilot Program to study the growth, cultivation and marketing of industrial hemp.
7. Local research will be needed to provide specific information on growth requirements, such as plant spacing and nutritional needs, as well as harvest and processing methods.
8. We will need to find out which varieties of industrial hemp are most suitable for the Virgin Islands. Information found in the literature indicates that the plant grows well in soil with a neutral to slightly alkaline pH. We will have to find cultivars that can tolerate calcareous soils (i.e. the caliche soil of St. Croix).
9. Our local research must be conducted knowing that there might not be any pesticides registered for industrial hemp; but as other states begin conducting research, this concentration of Industrial Hemp research should generate interest from pesticide companies to get products registered.
10. Obtaining fiber from industrial hemp involves a process called 'Retting' which breaks the chemical bonds holding the fibers together. Therefore, there will be a need for processing facilities to process industrial hemp. This will require substantial infrastructure development.

This bill will require the University of the Virgin Islands to play a major role in conducting research along with other educational and outreach activities. Adequate funding will be necessary for these activities to be successfully conducted.

The University Land Grant Programs, the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service, will probably be involved in any research activities resulting from this bill. However, these two agencies are funded under the U.S. Farm Bill. Both agencies are therefore required to adhere to the guidelines of the Farm Bill.

I would therefore recommend that the bill narrows the involvement of the University's Land-Grant Programs to:

1. An agricultural pilot program
2. Agricultural or academic research as specified in the Farm Bill.

We thank you for allowing us to provide these views on Bill # 31-0100 on behalf of the University.

Thank you very much,

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