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Dear Montana Farmer,

As you may be aware, then-Governor Judy Martz signed a law in 2001 legalizing industrial hemp cultivation in Montana. This law gave rulemaking authority governing hemp cultivation to the Montana Department of Agriculture, and directed the Department of Agriculture to request a change or waiver in federal law to allow for hemp cultivation. On its way to law, the bill was supported by the Montana Grain Growers Association, Montana State University, and the Montana Farmers Union, and is now codified as state law in MCA Title 80, Chapter 18.

Our Montana law does not really allow Montana farmers to cultivate and sell industrial hemp, however, because of the strictures imposed by the federal Drug Enforcement Agency. This may soon change. Just this month, Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas) and eight other members of the United States House of Representatives introduced HR-1009, a bill to allow farmers in America to cultivate industrial hemp and tap into this lucrative agricultural market. In our neighboring state of North Dakota the Agricultural Commissioner grew tired of waiting for the federal government to implement rules, so he has formally proposed rules to license farmers in his state to grow industrial hemp under existing North Dakota law.

The United States is now the world's biggest consumer of hemp products, including fiber, food, and health and beauty aids. Hemp fiber has a wide variety of uses, including textiles, biocomposites that are increasingly replacing fiberglass in such areas as automobile manufacturing, paper, and biofuel. The United States is now the only major industrial country that prohibits cultivation of industrial hemp, thus all hemp seed, hemp oil, and hemp fiber must be imported from foreign countries. Canada, especially our neighbors in Alberta and Saskatchewan, produce most of the hemp imported into the United States. These Canadian farmers have discovered that hemp cultivation is more sustainable and more profitable than other traditional crops. Moreover, they have tapped into the largest and most robust market for their crop: export to the United States.

The Montana Hemp Council (MHC) is a nonprofit organization formed in 2005 whose purpose is to educate the public concerning the history, uses, and benefits of cannabis hemp, and advocate to end its prohibition in Montana and nationwide. Many efforts are now afoot to allow Montana farmers to cultivate industrial hemp, and MHC serves as a clearinghouse of information about industrial hemp cultivation, and the potential ecological and economic benefits to Montanans.

For more information on the cultivation and use of industrial hemp, please call, write, or visit our website, www.montanahemp.org. We look forward to working with you to make hemp cultivation a reality in our great state.

Sincerely,

Andrea Behunin,

President, Montana Hemp Council