

# Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation: Industrial hemp bill passes legislature in historic vote

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MADISON – In historic votes this week, the State Senate passed industrial hemp legislation on a 33-0 vote and the State Assembly followed suit two days later with a 92-0 vote. The Wisconsin Farm Bureau-backed bill to legally permit Wisconsin farmers to grow industrial hemp for the first time in decades now awaits Governor Walker's signature.

Senate Bill 119, authored by Sen. Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point) and Rep. Jesse Kremer (R-Kewaskum), creates a hemp pilot program that will permit farmers to grow industrial hemp through a licensing system from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

"This is an exciting opportunity for Wisconsin farmers," said WFBF President Jim Holte. "The ability to grow industrial hemp opens up new market opportunities for Wisconsin farmers who have been struggling with low market prices for quite some time now."

Hemp has not been legally grown in Wisconsin since 1957. Provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill allow states to set up hemp pilot programs to permit the growing, cultivating and marketing of hemp. Thirty-three states have passed some form of legislation legalizing hemp production and research, and over thirty industrialized countries allow their farmers to grow hemp as a crop.

"Wisconsin once dominated hemp production from the 1930s to 1957," Holte said.

“This legislation will allow farmers to once again position ourselves as industry leaders to capitalize on existing markets and capture those that are still emerging. I really want to thank Senator Testin, Representative Kremer and Assembly Agriculture Committee Chair Representative Lee Nerison for working together to get this bill done.”

The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation is the state’s largest general farm organization, made up of 61 county Farm Bureaus and representing agriculturists and farms of every size, commodity and management style.