

Sen. Shilling: Republican confusion threatens hemp industry

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Republican flip-flops create uncertainty for farmers and families

MADISON, WI – After a proposal to allow growing industrial hemp in Wisconsin was signed into law, a known discrepancy ignored by Legislative Republicans has created chaos among farmers and families. A recently released memo from the Department of Justice (DOJ) stated that industrial hemp farmers were not authorized to produce or sell cannabidiol, better known as CBD oil. Throughout the legislative process, Democrats, health advocates and the Wisconsin Farmers Union raised concerns that Republicans were blocking the manufacturing of CBD oil and limiting the potential of industrial hemp. Despite repeated warnings, Republicans blocked numerous Democratic solutions to fix their error.

“Republicans knew that CBD oil could be a product for hemp producers and refused to put that into law,” said Senate Democratic Leader Jennifer Shilling (D-La Crosse). “This reckless and irresponsible decision by Republicans has become a huge burden on Wisconsin farmers and the families and children that rely on CBD oil to treat serious and sometimes life-threatening conditions. Rather than heed the advice from Democrats and advocates, Republicans sided with special interests that oppose CBD oil and want to limit its use.”

Hemp-based CBD oil is a non-hallucinogenic oil, which can be used to treat children and adults with seizure disorders, and those suffering from PTSD and anxiety. Democrats introduced an amendment in 2017 to remove the barriers for families to access this medication; unfortunately, it was struck down by Senate Republicans. Efforts in the 2015 legislative session to legalize CBD oil production were also

blocked by the majority party.

“It’s unfair that Republicans allow big pharmaceutical companies to override the needs of local families and write rules that threaten Wisconsin communities,” said Shilling. “The lack of Republican leadership is a double-edge sword that threatens the potential for a prosperous industry in Wisconsin, while denying children the life-saving medication they rely on.”

The Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection received 350 applications to grow industrial hemp in Wisconsin. Applicants were notified of DOJ’s memo just three days before the application deadline, leaving many farmers in financial limbo.