

Sen. Testin: Hemp bill passes Senate

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Madison, WI - Those participating in Wisconsin's burgeoning hemp industry scored a win on Tuesday with the passage of the Growing Opportunities Act through the State Senate.

The bill, authored by Senators Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point) and Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee) and Representatives Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc) and Dave Considine (D-Baraboo), would transition Wisconsin's hemp pilot program into a permanent one - a move made possible by the passage of the 2018 federal farm bill last December.

"Hemp is Wisconsin's comeback crop," said Sen. Testin. "This bill works to build confidence at every level of the hemp industry. Farmers, processors, retailers, and customers need to have a reasonable regulatory framework that ensures maximum opportunity and safety."

In 2019, over 1,400 farmers applied for grower's licenses from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) - up from 250 in year one. The number of hemp processor applications also grew exponentially - from around 100 to nearly 700. Rep. Kurtz, a certified organic farmer, holds one of the growing licenses and planted hemp for the first time this year.

"Hemp gives farmers the opportunity to diversify," said Rep. Kurtz. "That's especially important when commodity prices are low. I believe that with the right framework, Wisconsin can and will be a national leader in hemp production. That's something we can all support."

Rep. Dave Consideine, a former livestock farmer, agreed that now is the time to make Wisconsin's hemp program permanent.

"The Growing Opportunities Act will ensure that Wisconsin's hemp program continues to be managed right here in Wisconsin," said Rep. Consideine. "That's important to me, and I know it's important to the hundreds of farmers across the state who are investing their time, money, and effort in this crop."

Sen. Lena Taylor, a Milwaukee Democrat, points out that hemp is providing opportunities for people in every corner of the state.

"Hemp is providing opportunities for rural and urban entrepreneurs alike, and many of my constituents are emerging as leaders in this industry," said Senator Taylor. "Americans already consume millions of imported hemp products-that's money that can and should be spent here in our state of Wisconsin, and my city of Milwaukee."

Now that the Growing Opportunities Act has passed the Senate, it must now pass the Assembly, where it had a hearing earlier this month.