

ACT NO. 7395

BILL NO. 29-0350

TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Regular Session

2012

An Act to conduct a referendum on the issue of promoting the production, processing, manufacture and distribution of industrial hemp in the Virgin Islands

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WHEREAS, hemp (*Cannabis*, subspecies-*sativa*) is the name of the soft, durable fiber that is cultivated from plants of the *Cannabis* genus, cultivated for industrial and commercial (non-drug) use; and

WHEREAS, hemp is the world's strongest natural fiber. It has been used to make cloth and rope for over 10,000 years; and

WHEREAS, hemp was the first crop ever cultivated for textile production; and

WHEREAS, hemp cloth is stronger, longer lasting, more resistant to mildew, and cheaper to produce than cloth made of cotton. Hemp ropes are known for their strength and durability; and

WHEREAS, hemp can be used to make virtually anything that is currently made of cotton, timber, or petroleum; and

WHEREAS, hemp grows well in a wide variety of climates and soils. It requires far less fertilizer and pesticides than most commercial crops; and

WHEREAS, all parts of the hemp plant are useful. Hemp can be used to produce everything from fuel to soap. The oil from hemp seeds has the highest percentage of essential fatty acids and the lowest percentage of saturated fats; and

WHEREAS, industrial hemp can yield 3-8 dry tons of fiber per acre. This is four times what an average acre of trees can yield. It can replace wood fiber and help save our forests. Trees take approximately 20 years to mature – hemp takes 4 months. Paper made from hemp lasts for centuries, compared to 25-80 years for paper made from wood pulp; and

WHEREAS, industrial hemp is capable of producing a multitude of consumer products including: hemp milk, seeds, butter, oil and cheese; hemp bags, clothing, draperies, carpet and wall coverings; hempcrete (hemp-based concrete); hemp flooring, furniture, cabinets and counters; hemp fuel; hemp paper, packaging, checks and paper towel, hemp pastries and bread; hemp creams, lotions, soaps, shampoos and conditioners to name a few; and

WHEREAS, industrial hemp is a valuable, low-cost biological resource that can be grown in most climates; and

WHEREAS, industrial hemp is a hardy plant whose rapid growth and high resistance to disease largely eliminate the need for costly herbicides or pesticides; and

WHEREAS, the production, processing, manufacture and distribution of industrial hemp constitutes a viable industry of the territory which can provide much needed revenues for the territory and employment opportunities for its residents; Now, Therefore,

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any other law, the Boards of Elections shall, conduct a referendum poll, during the General Election held in November, 2012, to determine the sense of the electors of the Virgin Islands on the issue of promoting the production, processing, manufacture and distribution of industrial hemp in the Virgin Islands. The referendum must be in the following form:

Hemp is a variety of the cannabis plant that is not the same as the variety of the cannabis plant known as marijuana. Hemp plants cannot be used to produce a “high” because they have minimal levels of tetrahydrocannabinol, or “THC”, which is the main psych-active substance found in the marijuana plant. The fibers and oils of the hemp plant have a wide range of uses. “Industrial hemp” refers to the many commercial and industrial uses of the hemp plant, including the production of paper, textiles, ropes, building materials, foods, and health products.

“Mark only one square”

Are you in favor of the Legislature enacting legislation that allows for the production, processing, manufacturing and distributing of industrial hemp in the Virgin Islands?; and

YES

NO

SECTION 2. The Legislature shall not be required to take any action toward the licensing of industrial hemp production in the Territory, unless both (1) a majority (fifty percent plus one) of the persons casting a ballot during the General Election in November 2012, vote on the referendum issue set forth in Section 1 of this Act; and (2) a majority (fifty percent plus one) of those persons voting on the referendum issue vote in the affirmative.

Thus passed by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands on August 22, 2012.

Witness our Hands and Seal of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands this 28th Day of August, A.D., 2012.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Ronald E. Russell".

Ronald E. Russell
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Sammuell Sanes".
Sammuell Sanes
Legislative Secretary

Bill No.29-0350 is hereby approved.

Witness my hand and the Seal of the Government of the United States Virgin Islands at Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, this 11th day of September A.D., 2012.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "John P. deJongh, Jr.".
John P. deJongh, Jr.
Governor