

# Democrat Calls GOP's Proposed Hemp Ban a Major Step Backward

## Minnesota's Hemp Industry Faces New Uncertainty After Federal GOP Push for Restrictions

### *Minnesota's Booming Hemp Industry: A Success Story Built on Smart State Regulation*

Since Congress legalized hemp in 2018, Minnesota has emerged as one of the country's strongest examples of how thoughtful regulation can nurture a thriving new sector. In just two and a half years since the state enacted its own hemp law, Minnesota's hemp economy has expanded into a *\$200 million-a-year industry*, generating thousands of jobs across farming, processing, retail, brewing, textiles, wellness products and more.

Minnesota's approach has been widely viewed as a gold standard. The state implemented comprehensive regulations, safety standards and licensing structures for hemp growers, processors and retailers. Today, more than 132 licensed growers, 96 processors and over 2,000 retailers rely on a stable, predictable market that supports both innovation and compliance.

Consumers have responded in kind. While only a minority of Minnesotans use hemp or cannabis products regularly, over *60 percent* of residents support legalization. The customer base spans across veterans, farmers, teachers, and even hockey parents proof of hemp's broad appeal and accessibility.

But this success story is now under threat.

## Federal GOP Push for a Hemp Ban Sparks Widespread Concern in Minnesota

A few weeks ago, congressional Republicans advanced legislation that would dramatically restrict hemp-derived products nationwide. For Minnesota, the impact would be immediate and far reaching: lost jobs, shuttered small businesses, weakened rural economies and uncertainty across the entire supply chain.

What frustrated Minnesota lawmakers and industry leaders most was not just the substance of the proposal, but the process. According to Rep. Angie Craig Minnesota Democrat, House Agriculture Committee ranking member and author of this op-ed Republicans pushed forward without consulting Minnesota stakeholders or the committees that oversee agriculture, consumer safety or economic development.

Since news of the proposal broke, Craig's office has been inundated with calls, emails and letters from Minnesotans worried that Washington's one-size-fits-all policy could erase years of progress overnight.

# Why Minnesota Leaders Say Federal Overreach Is the Wrong Approach

For Craig and other Minnesota lawmakers, the issue is not whether hemp should be regulated—Minnesota already does that. The issue is that federal action should provide clarity and structure, *not chaos*.

Hemp businesses depend on consistent rules. Farmers need predictable crop guidelines. Processors need safety standards. Retailers need labeling rules that protect consumers. Minnesota has all of this, and it's working.

A sweeping federal ban threatens to destroy an industry that Minnesotans have worked hard to build.

Moreover, Craig argues, federal agencies must define their roles clearly:

- **USDA** should standardize hemp cultivation and production rules.
- **FDA** should regulate hemp-infused foods, beverages, supplements and cosmetics.
- **FTC** should enforce marketing practices that protect consumers, especially minors.
- **TTB** could regulate intoxicating hemp products with experience gained from alcohol oversight.

Instead of dismantling what works, Craig urges Congress to build a modern regulatory framework that supports state innovation while ensuring national consistency.

## Minnesota Has Led on Hemp And Wants Federal Partners, Not Saboteurs

Minnesota lawmakers aren't new to hemp policy. Craig has been deeply involved:

- In 2020, she pushed federal agencies to streamline hemp rules to benefit Minnesota farmers and tribes.
- In 2023, she introduced bipartisan legislation establishing federal safety standards for CBD foods and supplements.

Minnesota has also implemented strong protections to prevent hemp products from being marketed to children in the same way as flavored vapes or e-cigarettes—a concern shared widely by parents, retailers and law enforcement.

Craig is clear: Minnesota's regulations work, and federal leadership should complement not contradict, the progress made.

## A Call for Smart Federal Policy, Not Blanket Bans

Under the newly passed federal law, Congress now has one year to determine how hemp products will be regulated nationwide. For Craig, this is a critical opportunity—one that must not be wasted.

Rather than erasing an entire industry or imposing overly broad restrictions, she argues that Congress must:

- Protect state-level innovation
- Support small businesses and family farms
- Create clear federal guidelines
- Keep intoxicating products away from children

- Ensure consumer safety across all markets

Hemp's economic impact is too important and too promising to jeopardize.

## **Minnesota's Hemp Future Depends on Federal Clarity and Collaboration**

For Minnesota's hemp growers, processors and retailers, the stakes are high. They represent a fast-growing segment of the state's agricultural and retail sectors, creating jobs and generating tax revenue across rural and urban communities alike.

Craig says she's ready to keep fighting for them.

"I stand ready to continue my work in Congress to support the Minnesota farmers who grow hemp, the small businesses that process it, and the Minnesota brewers and retailers who produce safe, regulated products," she writes.

As Congress debates the next phase of hemp policy, Minnesota's message is clear: protect progress, support innovation, and avoid unnecessary federal interference that could devastate a thriving industry.

The future of hemp in Minnesota and across the country depends on it.

For more information contact at [info@cannabisriskmanager.com](mailto:info@cannabisriskmanager.com)

Email: [info@cannabisriskmanager.com](mailto:info@cannabisriskmanager.com) | Phone: +415-226-4060

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