

Oregon hemp tracking proposal stirs opposition

County governments willing to forgo new hemp requirements

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

Oregon's county governments have backed off from a cannabis tracking proposal that met with opposition from the state's hemp industry.

Changes to Oregon's hemp laws are being discussed during the 2020 legislative session in reaction to the USDA's new nationwide regulations for the crop.

To comply with the federal requirements, lawmakers are considering vesting the Oregon Department of Agriculture with additional authorities over hemp.

Without these provisions, the state's hemp farmers would come under the direct jurisdiction of the USDA later this year.

The revisions included in one proposal, House Bill 4072, are supported by Oregon State University, the Oregon Farm Bureau and the Oregon Industrial Hemp Farmers Association, which claim they're necessary to preserve the state's position as a top hemp producer.

"This bill is exceedingly important for us to maintain our own oversight and regulation of this industry and as a result continue our national leadership in this important sector," said Rep. Brad Witt, D-Clatskanie, chief sponsor of HB 4072.

Specifically, HB 4072 would allow ODA to conduct criminal background checks of hemp growers and to conform the state's hemp rules with federal regulations required under the 2018 Farm Bill, which effectively legalized the crop nationally.

The Association of Oregon Counties supports an alternative proposal, House Bill 4158, that would include these provisions but would also require hemp farmers to submit proof they can legally irrigate their crops.



Capital Press File

The Association of Oregon Counties is willing to strip away controversial hemp-related provisions from a bill the organization supports after encountering opposition.

Under the bill, identification tracking tags would also have to be attached to shipments of cannabis, which includes hemp as well as marijuana, a variant of the plant that contains psychoactive levels of THC.

Law enforcement officers would be able to seize cannabis that violates the tracking tag requirement.

The Oregon Industrial Hemp Farmers Association objected to these additional requirements during a Feb. 5 legislative hearing, arguing they're unnecessarily onerous for the Oregon Department of Agriculture as well as growers.

"We do want to collaborate with law enforcement," said Courtney Moran, the association's president.

However, it's unacceptable to bring hemp under the same regulations as marijuana without examining the higher costs for farmers and other issues, she said.

Water rights should remain under the jurisdiction of the Oregon Water Resources Department and hemp shouldn't be singled out under the law, since the need for enforcement isn't limited to any one commodity, Moran said.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture already wants to shift a portion of its hemp license fees to OWRD for a water master to investigate hemp-related violations, she said.

The Oregon Farm Bureau agreed that HB

4158's concept of placing hemp transportation under the jurisdiction of the Oregon Liquor Control Commission wasn't properly vetted.

"Our members don't feel OLCC tracking is appropriate for a legal agricultural commodity," said Mary Anne Cooper, vice president of public policy for the group.

Submitting information about water rights to the ODA wouldn't be useful in terms of enforcing water rights, which should stay under the OWRD's authority, Cooper said. "It's not something the ODA should get in the middle of."

The Association of Oregon Counties recognizes that hemp is a significant new crop with a vibrant future, said Rob Bovett, the group's interim executive director and legal counsel. The association simply wants to prevent it from providing cover for the illegal transportation of marijuana to other states, he said.

"We seem to be leaking a lot of THC out of the hemp program into the interstate black market," Bovett said.

Even so, the Association of Oregon Counties wants to move forward with other revisions in HB 4158 specific to marijuana law, so it's willing to strip away the elements opposed by the hemp industry, subject to further discussions, he said.

"We want that out of this bill," Bovett said.

Oregon wine industry sees leadership shuffle to begin 2020

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

PORTLAND — Members of the Oregon Winegrowers Association will likely elect a new board of directors sometime in 2020, pending changes to the organization's bylaws.

The leadership shuffle comes as the OWA seeks to differentiate its role from the Oregon Wine Board, a semi-independent government agency whose directors are appointed by the governor.

OWA is the primary trade group representing Oregon wineries and vineyards, lobbying on behalf of the industry in Salem and Washington, D.C. It is separate from the OWB, which was created by state lawmakers in 2003 to promote wine research and marketing funded by a \$25-per-ton winegrape tax.

Until recently, the two groups shared the same administrator, Tom Danowski, and continue to share the same board. Some winemakers, however, worry the overlap creates conflict and confusion, unfairly benefiting OWA members by having the same people decide how to spend their tax dollars.

Kevin Chambers, OWA board president and owner of Koosah Farm in Amity, Ore., said the association previously decided to combine boards with the OWB due to the smaller size of the industry at the time. There were simply not enough interested, qualified candidates to fill two boards, he said.

But as the number of Oregon wineries has increased nearly fourfold from 201 in 2013 to 793 in 2018, Chambers said now is the time for change. He spoke during the annual Oregon Wine Symposium on Feb. 11 at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland.



Jana McKamey, executive director of the Oregon Winegrowers Association.

"Sometimes when you speak truth to power, power listens and acts," Chambers said. "Your OWA board listened to these criticisms, and we have taken action."

Danowski stepped down as executive director of the OWA in December after eight years, though he will continue to serve as president of the OWB. Jana McKamey, former vice president of government affairs and operations for OWA, took over as executive director of the association on Jan. 1.

The next step, Chambers said, will be electing a new board for the OWA. First he said the organization needs to change its bylaws to set up an election down the road.

"Presently, our bylaws just say the board of the OWA shall be the same of the governor-appointed OWB," Chambers said. "So we have to make some changes."

An ad hoc bylaws committee formed in November, and includes 13 OWA members from around the state. Chambers said he expects they will come forward with a recommendation later this year.

McKamey, who also spoke at the symposium, said both organizations see this move as a positive. "It allows us to be laser-focused on our distinct but interconnected missions," she said.

She hopes that, in turn, will help to rebuild trust and

OREGON WINE ASSOCIATION

The Oregon Winegrowers Association currently shares a board of directors with the Oregon Wine Board, whose members are governor-appointed.

Members include:

- Kevin Chambers, Koosah Farm, Amity.
- Bob Morus, Phelps Creek Vineyards, Hood River.
- Donna Morris, Winderlea Vineyard and Winery, Dundee.
- Eugenia Keegan, Jackson Family Wines, McMinnville.
- Bertony Faustin, Abbey Creek Vineyard, North Plains.
- Hilda Jones, Abacela Vineyards and Winery, Roseburg.
- Justin King, King Estate Winery, Eugene.
- Barbara Steele, Cowhorn Vineyard & Garden, Jacksonville.
- Jason Tosch, Stoller Family Estate, Dayton.

unity within the industry after an especially combative 2019 legislative session marked by several controversial wine-related bills — most notably Senate Bill 111, which would have stiffened penalties for labeling violations. Opponents argued SB 111 would have crippled their businesses by deterring out-of-state wineries from buying Oregon grapes.

An industry coalition came together to defeat SB 111, and then went on to form its own trade association, the Oregon Wine Council, with its own board of directors in opposition of the OWA.

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