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HEMP INDUSTRY AT STAKE



JOHN HART, STATE JOURNAL

Crone Apothecary owner and hemp farmer Phillip Scott says 98% of what Wisconsin's hemp farmers produce each year will become illegal next November after a last-minute provision banning intoxicating hemp products was added to an agriculture funding bill to reopen the federal government after a 43-day shutdown.

Ban slipped into federal government shutdown bills

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John Kashau has never believed in retirement. So when the Milwaukee resident sold Kangaroo Brands, the business his family has operated for four decades, he turned his interests to hemp and THC through his Kind Oasis storefront and manufacturing company, made possible after the federal government legalized hemp years earlier.

Not only was it a way to keep the family business tradition alive, but Kashau took pride in helping scores of people deal with their military PTSD, insomnia or general anxiety through CBD and THC products. But he and his 50 employees will likely soon be out of a job, after a provision in an agriculture bill passed as part of the plan to reopen the federal government banned the sale of most hemp products in the U.S. starting in November 2026. It's a devastating blow to a \$28 billion indus-

try that employs some 300,000 people nationwide, Kashau said. About 98% of Wisconsin's hemp industry involves consumable products, meaning the ban could wipe out more than \$700 million in economic production and nearly 3,500 jobs, Phillip Scott, a hemp farmer, business owner and lobbyist with the Wisconsin Hemp Farmers and Manufacturers Association, said.

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Sauk County Board passes 2026 budget that cuts \$7.3M

JOHN GITTINGS
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Sauk County cut its budget by about \$7.3 million compared to last year's and won't use property taxes to fund the county-owned nursing home in 2026. The County Board unanimously adopted the 2026 county budget on Tuesday evening, which will spend \$146.1 million on county services, down from \$153.4 million in 2025. Funding for the Sauk County Health Care Center, which has been a contentious issue since the Reedsburg nursing home went out for bid nearly two years ago, is nearly \$2 million less than 2025 and will no longer use property tax dollars. Property taxes are projected to generate just more than \$36 million in 2026 county revenue. Residents of a \$329,000 county home, the average property value, are scheduled to pay about \$986 to the county next year, which is down from about \$1,047 in 2025. However, the average county property value increased from about \$283,000 in

2025 to the current \$329,000, which results in an average tax increase of about \$85 for county homes. Budgeting for the nursing home, which remains under county ownership but still, according to county Administrator Lisa Wilson, has a binding agreement with Aria Healthcare, of Milwaukee, to privatize the facility, is around \$12.3 million for 2026, down from \$14.2 million this year. The agreement, which has not been finalized, is for Aria to purchase the home for \$5.1 million. Sauk County Citizens for Senior Care filed a lawsuit against Sauk County contesting the sale that was dismissed with prejudice, meaning the group can't refile it, in July in Columbia County. However, in June with litigation pending, Sauk County elected to lease the home to Aria to bypass the suit contesting the sale. Wisconsin Department of Health Services then required Aria to resubmit an application to transfer bed licenses because of the change of structure from a sale to a lease.

Please see BUDGET, Page A6



JOHN GITTINGS, NEWS REPUBLIC

The Sauk County Board unanimously passed its \$146.1 million budget for 2026 on Tuesday evening.

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