

American Beekeeping Federation Legislative Priorities for 2016:

- **Funding for Research.** There is no question that the bee industry continues to sustain major colony losses throughout the country. We will continue to work with Congress to obtain the necessary appropriations to continue vital research into the many problems that negatively impact honey bee health. In addition to USDA-ARS, we also work with other public and private research institutions that can provide meaningful research opportunities for our industry.
- **Maintaining ARS Lab Funding.** The ABF continues to urge that USDA-ARS honey bee research facilities be fully funded in order to maintain and enhance their research efforts. We are excited to hear that USDA-ARS will be opening a new honey bee research facility in Davis, California, which is scheduled to be up and running later this year. We will continue to work with ARS and urge them to focus their research efforts upon the most serious issues facing the bee industry.
- **Protecting our Honey Market.** There is no question that the world honey market has been in a downward spiral during the past year. The fact that the U.S. honey market in 2015 consisted of 20% domestic and 80% imported honey is a serious concern for beekeepers throughout the nation. The increased strength of the U.S. dollar in relation to other world currencies is part of the problem, but honey adulteration with less expensive sweeteners is also suspected to be a factor in the increased supply of honey worldwide. The ABF, along with representatives of other honey industry groups, has developed a modified proposal for a national honey standard that we would like to see adopted; however, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has thus far refused to work on the proposed honey standard. Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, sent FDA a summary of comments received from concerned industry members regarding the need for a standard of identity for honey, but so far there is still no indication that FDA intends to act upon these recommendations. A standard of identity would give state and federal officials a better tool that could be used to stop those who are adding cheaper sweeteners to honey.
- **Pesticides.** We are losing our bees at unsustainable rates, and exposure to certain pesticides continues to play a major role in colony decline. The fact that neonicotinoids have been implicated in honey bee losses during corn planting in the US and Canada is a reminder that this is an area that cannot be overlooked, no matter the pushback from entities with vested interests. The fact that neonicotinoids and other pesticides, including many fungicides and insect growth regulators applied to a variety of crops, continue to have negative effects on honey bees throughout the country is of extreme concern to the ABF. The ABF, on its own and with the assistance of the National Honey Bee Advisory Board (NHBAB), has developed a working relationship with the EPA as a stakeholder in the efforts to revise registration and labeling of pesticides. It is clear that the incident reporting system and the policing of compliance issues are broken. ABF leaders and several members have already devoted considerable time and effort toward these issues in recent years but there is a great deal more work that must be done if real progress is to be made in protecting honey bees from the negative effects of pesticides. We are concerned that proposed “Managed Pollinator Protection Plans” (MP3s being developed in many states may exacerbate rather than improve the situation, and we have been participating in discussions about such programs over the past year.
- **Promoting and protecting Honey Bee Habitat.** Lack of sufficient clean foraging resources for honey bees in many parts of the country is having a profoundly negative effect on hive health and productivity. We are committed to working with government agencies, agriculture allies and other stakeholders to

develop policies and programs to enhance, protect, expand and provide access to suitable pollinator habitat. There are several new initiatives that will enhance forage for pollinators in many parts of the country, and ABF is supportive of these efforts. One great example is the new joint forage/habitat project in the upper Midwest with Pheasants Forever, Project Apis-M and Browning Honey Farm.

- Crop Insurance, ELAP and H-2A Labor Programs. The ABF continues to work for USDA disaster programs to be more available to beekeepers and to make funding of these programs permanent. We need programs that allow for the management of risk without opening the door to fraud. The beekeeping industry's need for legal laborers requires an H-2A labor program that works. In addition, the ABF continues to be an active member of the agriculture labor coalition working on meaningful immigration reform. These are difficult issues and require our input and consistent voice to resolve.

In order to carry out these ABF objectives, it is necessary that your ABF representatives travel to Washington periodically. This is always an expensive endeavor as airline fares keep increasing and hotel rates in Washington are some of the highest in the nation. The services of Meyers & Associates are necessary to assist the ABF with legislative and government relations efforts in Washington, and their fees must be paid on a regular basis. We must have them working for us on the scene in order to keep us abreast of anything that may impact the beekeeping industry.

The bottom line is that the ABF cannot achieve the goals set by the membership without the financial resources to get the job done, and, at this time, we are again well behind budget in the ABF Legislative Fund. Your commitment to help in these efforts is essential to their success. We can assure you that your contributions to the ABF Legislative Fund are spent carefully and with full consideration of how important this work is for you, the ABF members. Your legislative fund donations are very much appreciated and are an investment in the future of your business, as well as the bee industry as a whole. You can easily donate online at abfnet.org (click on the "Donate to the ABF" link on the home page), or send a check with the enclosed donation form to the ABF office at the letterhead address.

While your contributions are essential to the success of ABF efforts, there is something else just as important – maybe more important, at times. We need you to keep in contact with your members of Congress, including your Representative and your state's two Senators. They and their staff members need to be aware of your beekeeping activities and of our industry's needs – and they need to hear this from you. There is helpful information in this newsletter that can assist you when contacting your Congressional representatives and Senators.

There is a role for each of us, and together we can accomplish a great deal. As we progress throughout the year, it is our intention to keep you informed with the latest developments and needs in the legislative area that are critical to our industry. Please let us know how we can better serve you and all ABF members.

Tim May, Chairman, ABF Legislative Committee