

# Government Relations Update



by Troy Fore, ABF Director of Government Relations



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You may have noticed that this is an election year!

So far, most of us have been blasted with only campaign ads and news about the Republican presidential hopefuls. Soon, though, the candidates for lesser offices will be vying for your votes.

All the members of the U.S. House of Representatives are up for election/re-election this year, as are one-third of the Senators. Many state legislators and some governors will face the voters this year.

All these people have one thing in common – they want your vote. The other thing many of them have in common, I would venture to say, is that they know next to nothing about honey bees.

Here's a golden opportunity for us to tell our story. These candidates are coming to your town. They will be at meet-and-greet events. Give them an opportunity to meet-the-beekeeper, to learn the importance of honey bees and their keepers, especially the extent of beekeeping in your legislative district, Congressional district, even your state.

Write up a brief letter to make your points and – if you can't get a chance to speak to the candidate – put it into the hand of one of his/her aides. You can make a lasting impression.

Your state association could make up a fact sheet telling how many beekeepers you have, amount of honey produced in your state and your bees' contribution to general agriculture through pollination. If it applies, don't forget the production of queens and package bees – and even bee supplies, especially if you are home to one of the large suppliers. A few samples of honey could sweeten the appeal.

If the need arises, and if your honey operation fills the bill, you might consider hosting a meet-the-beekeepers event at your honey house or even in a beeyard.

Remember: we have to tell our story; no one else will do that. If I can help you on making any contacts, let me know.

*Editor's Note: If you believe that the ABF is heading in the right direction, please show your support with a donation. At the ABF Annual Business Meeting in Las Vegas, those present pledged \$17,000 for legislative efforts. If you were not in Las Vegas or not at the business meeting, we still need your support! We must energize beekeepers to come together to work collaboratively on the many challenges that we face. Thank you in advance for your contribution.*



*During election year 2010, Rosa DeLauro, top Democrat on the House Agricultural Appropriations Subcommittee, visits with Connecticut beekeepers and gets a ball cap and a jar of honey from Ted Jones. ABF Director Becky Jones reported how the visit was arranged: "After I talked to her Washington, D.C., aide, I called her scheduler to see if she could come to the Field Day and just talk informally with the beekeepers...she spent about an hour talking, fielding questions, etc. with the group. The general feeling from the beekeepers was very positive."*



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