

# Government Relations Report

by: Gene Brandi  
ABF Vice President



The new Congress is now in session and Committee members have been selected. The House Ag Committee is now chaired by Congressman Mike Conaway (R-Texas). The Senate Ag Committee is chaired by Senator Pat Roberts (R-Kansas). We look forward to a good working relationship with the new chairmen and their committees.

The 2014 Farm Bill charged the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture with developing a report for the Commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, describing how a Federal Standard of Identity for honey would be in the interest of consumers, the honey industry, and U.S. Agriculture. USDA accepted comments from mid-August until mid-October on the proposal to establish a Federal honey standard. On December 29, 2015, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, sent the required report to the FDA which summarizes the 85 comments received. Even though the preponderance of the comments (89%) supported the

establishment of a Federal Standard of Identity for honey, the report indicated that there was not a clear consensus as to its specific content. This, in spite of the fact that the petitioners, including the ABF, had worked for several years carefully preparing language for a national standard prior to submitting this latest petition. It certainly appears that not enough weight was given to the proposed standard as submitted by the petitioners. The ABF has been working for more than ten years on this issue and co-signed the original petition which was submitted to FDA in 2006. The ABF will continue to pursue a Federal Standard of Identity for honey as mandated in the organization's continuing resolutions.

The ABF remains concerned with proposed EPA pesticide label changes which we understand will be revealed for public comment in early 2015. Clear, enforceable label language with no loopholes or exemptions is what is truly needed to best protect pollinators. We will continue to pursue such language as it can best provide the fundamental protection from pesticides that all pollinators need.

It was gratifying to see that the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration responded to the petition by the California Farm Bureau Federation (co-signed by the ABF) asking that drivers hauling bees be exempted from the additional 30 minute rest break required in the Federal Hours of Service regulations. The ABF co-submitted testimony with AHPA during the comment period which lasted from early January until early February. It is our hope that bee haulers can obtain a permanent exemption from this rule in order not to jeopardize the health of bees in transit.

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