



# WASHINGTON UPDATE

by: Meyers & Associates

Congratulations to all American Beekeeping Federation (ABF) members on a well-attended and informative 75th Anniversary ABF Conference & Tradeshow in Reno. During the meeting, we were able to hear from a wide cross section of beekeepers on the legislative and regulatory issues that were of concern to them. This information is invaluable when structuring a legislative strategy and responses to new regulations that will affect our industry. Issues in Washington are dynamic and ever-changing by their very nature. With this in mind, the Washington Update provides the legislative situation as it exists upon submission for publication in *ABF Quarterly*. We do our best to look ahead and provide you with our best predictions. The issues listed below are the matters that we and the officers of ABF are focusing on at this time.

## **Funding of the Federal Government and Appropriations of Issues Important to the Honey Bee Industry**

At this writing, the federal government runs out of money for all federal programs on Thursday February 8th. There is little expectation that Congress will be able to agree on a long-term funding measure that also includes a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) immigration fix. Congress is currently in discussion on a stop-gap funding measure that will fund the government through March. The Continuing Resolution (CR- a continuous authority to spend, but only at FY 2017 approved levels) that the House Republican leadership is considering at this time is expected to include funding for defense spending through the full fiscal year and an extension of the nation's borrowing limit (debt ceiling). The rest of the federal government will be funded through March at existing FY2017 levels. Also, under discussion this week is whether the CR will include disaster aid for areas damaged by hurricanes and fires last year. The House passed an \$81 billion disaster bill in December of 2017, however, the Senate has not acted on the legislation.

We expect the House to agree on a short-term measure that will address some if not all defense spending and possibly a debt limit extension to keep the government operating through March. The Senate is expected to agree. The next crucial provision to establish funding through the rest of the fiscal year will be inclusion of a "fix" to the DACA immigration issues. At this writing, the talks continue but there is yet an agreement between Republicans, Democrats and the White House on what that solution should be.

## **Reauthorization of the Farm Bill**

The current farm bill expires on September 30 of this year. The Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Michael Conaway (R-TX), is still

saying that he hopes to bring the House version of the 2018 Farm Bill for consideration in the House Agriculture Committee in late February or in March, but that this schedule depends on available time on the House floor. He has also said that the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is very close to being able to provide the committee with a "score" of the cost of the multi-title legislation. He has said that the "good news" on this farm bill process is that the 2018 farm bill does not have to make any mandatory cuts, unlike the \$23 billion cut that was required in the 2014 farm bill. In fact, farm bill spending, according to the committee, has come down \$100 billion since 2014, primarily in reduction of spending on SNAP (food stamps) due to the improvement in the economy.

The Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, Pat Roberts (R-KS), has said he hopes to bring the Senate version of the 2018 farm bill to the Senate Agriculture Committee in March, but most believe this date will slip somewhat.

ABF's officers have been working in tandem with the American Honey Producers Association (AHPA) on our joint legislative priorities throughout the year to provide a unified legislative front to Congress on the important industry issues in the 2018 farm bill debate. This effort will continue through both the House and Senate Committee mark-ups as well as final consideration on the floor of the House and Senate.

## **Proposed Regulatory Guidance Concerning the Transportation of Agricultural Commodities Comment Period Extended**

ABF together, with the other member of our Livestock Transportation Coalition, in December 2017 requested a 30-day extension of the public comment period for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) notice of December 20, 2017 that announced the proposed regulatory guidance concerning the transportation of agriculture commodities. I am happy to report that FMCSA responded positively to our request and extended the January 19, 2018 deadline for comment submission to February 20, 2018. ABF, together with the other members of our coalition, will be submitting public comments. In addition, ABF and AHPA plan to submit a joint comment from the beekeeping industry.

We look forward to continuing this column with you in the next edition of *ABF Quarterly*.