

Government Relations Report

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ABF's Washington Team

It is nearing the end of the August recess and the members of Congress are where they need to be – back in their districts meeting with you, learning about the problems and issues facing beekeepers. As we get ready for Congress to return to town after Labor Day, this is a good time to let those in the American Beekeeping Federation (ABF) community know what Meyers & Associates does for ABF as it's Washington office. We also want you to know what to expect entering the final months of the 1st Session of the 115th Congress and the first year of the Trump Administration.

Meyers & Associates has served as the ABF's Washington office since 1982. We are a non-partisan Washington, D.C.-based full-service policy consulting/government relations firm. We are located on Capitol Hill, in the same location since the founding of the firm in 1981. We provide ABF with a permanent DC office representing ABF and its membership day-to-day on Capitol Hill and with many agencies of the executive branch of government. We provide a presence in multiple policy coalitions, including agricultural policy, food safety, environmental and natural resources, and tax and trade issues. Our goal is to maintain an effective working relationship with key members of Congress and their staff, as well as the members and staff of congressional committees, the federal agencies and the White House. The principles of Meyers & Associates have served in both the executive and legislative branches of government and actively participated in every farm bill reauthorization since 1973.

In serving as ABF's "eyes and ears" in Washington, we work very closely with the ABF officers and leadership daily reporting on federal and legislative policy, as well as federal funding important to the industry. In this capacity, we arrange for ABF officers and leadership to meet with key members of Congress and their staffs, as well as federal policymakers in the Administration on issues of importance to our industry, ensuring that the views and policy of America's beekeepers are heard. In this regard, we work closely with ABF's leadership providing advice and background as industry positions are developed.

As your Washington representatives, we participate in conference calls with ABF's officers, provide input to industry comment on numerous proposed federal regulations and attend industry meetings for ABF here and outside of Washington, including ABF's annual meeting.

There are, of course, many other things we do for ABF and its members that are not mentioned. Whenever an issue arises, our first response is "let's get it done." In other words, we do what you would do if you were in Washington every day instead of producing honey and much-needed pollination services for America's agriculture.

What's Ahead

Congress is returning to work after a month-long recess and there are several pieces of "must-pass" legislation on their plate. First and foremost, Congress must deal with the September 30th deadline to fund the federal government, or face a shutdown. They will also have to address raising the federal debt ceiling to prevent a default

on the nation's debt. In addition, passing a budget resolution, an infrastructure package, tax reform, and taking another stab at the repeal and replacement of the Affordable Health Care Act are all items that Congress would like to address.

Will the Government Shut Down?

Funding for the federal government must be provided by September 30th, or the government will face a shutdown on October 1st. In the past, when given few legislative days in September, Congress has had to pass a stop-gap piece of legislation known as a Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep the lights on while they address the details of funding the federal government for the next fiscal year. We anticipate that this will be the case again this year with Congress perhaps passing a CR to fund the government into December. We anticipate that the leadership in the House and Senate will try and avoid major "hot-button" issues in the CR, deferring them to the Omnibus Appropriations bill that will follow. In addition, with the national debt limit needing to be raised by the end of September or the middle of October, Congress must pass legislation raising the limit to avoid a default. The Administration has signaled that they would like a clean debt limit increase, so you may see an attempt to attach it to a short-term CR, but this would be a difficult process.

Tax Reform

The White House has said it would like to see the House of Representatives pass tax reform legislation in October, followed by the Senate approving a tax reform package in November. Republican leadership has said they will pass tax reform legislation using the budget reconciliation process which would allow the legislation to pass the Senate by 51 votes, rather than 60, to avoid a filibuster in the Senate. Members of the House and Senate Republican leadership have been meeting during the summer to try and come to an agreement on the general framework of a tax reform package. At this writing, the specifics of the package have not been public.

Farm Bill Reauthorization

The House and Senate Agriculture Committees have been working diligently to come up with the multi-titled legislation that makes up the farm bill before the current one expires in the fall of 2018. Several hearings have been held by the committees in Washington, in addition to field hearings and a series of listening sessions around the country. We anticipate that more hearings and listening sessions will be held in the Fall. The committee staff-people will soon begin to draft the new reauthorization with the hope that Congress will take up the legislation early in next year's session. Making sure the ABF voice is heard during this process is a key assignment for us.

These are just the highlights. There will be many other issues Congress will debate in the remaining months of 2017, and we can promise you that you will be represented in all that will influence you and your industry. Since 1982, we have felt "part of the family" and take our responsibilities seriously. Thanks for the opportunity to work with you.

It is our pleasure to represent such an important part of American Agriculture.