

Government Relations Update



by Troy Fore, ABF Director of Government Relations



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The ABF membership established a number of legislative goals during its annual business meeting, which was held on January 16, 2010, during the North American Beekeeping Conference and Tradeshow in Orlando.

A goal the ABF had been working on for several years was achieved immediately following the conference when USDA announced the funding of a national survey to determine what pests and pathogens already exist among the honey bee population. This knowledge will help us make rational decisions on exports and imports of honey bees and treatment programs. Our other top priorities will likely take more time and work to achieve:

Funding for CCD Research. Reports continue to reach us that many of our members and other beekeepers are again having large losses due to Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). The Farm Bill authorized additional funds for CCD research, but only a portion of that was actually appropriated. We are going to work with other industry organizations, honey bee researchers, and honey bee-dependent industries to procure funding for research and solutions and to encourage the Congress to appropriate the authorized funds.

Protecting our Honey Market. We had a lot of discussion in Orlando on the state of our honey market. The discussions came down to two priorities: 1) establishing a national standard of identity for honey – and establishing state standards, while we get cooperation from the FDA on the national standard; and 2) stopping illegal imports, particularly transshipment of Chinese honey through intermediary countries. We are being told that our honey market is in precarious shape. We need to take strong steps to shore it up.

FDA has promised Congress that it will get to work on the honey standard of identity the industry, led by ABF, submitted nearly four years ago. We need to prod the

proper Congressional offices to prod FDA. Meanwhile, Florida and California have established state honey standards and other states are following suit. We are encouraging those state actions. The standard of identity will give state and federal enforcement officials a better tool to use to stop those who are adding cheaper sweeteners to our honey.

On honey transshipment, the ABF Directors and 84 of our members signed letters in Orlando asking for the maximum sentence for a Chinese national who has pleaded guilty to transshipping honey from his company in China via other countries on to the United States to escape the antidumping duties. In Orlando, we were told that transshipped Chinese honey is being sold for as little as 80 cents per lb., compared \$1.20 for legally imported honey. If this is not stopped, it will drag down the U.S. prices.

Disaster Programs and Crop Insurance. We are continuing to work for USDA disaster programs to be more “user friendly” to beekeepers. We have submitted recommendations on the ELAP disaster program and revisions are in progress. USDA is considering expanding the beekeeper crop insurance program to include more than honey. We are consulting on this.

Our other legislative priorities include:

- Opposing all live honey bee imports into the United States, including both queens and honey bees, until further research can demonstrate that these imports hold no harm for U.S. honey bees.
- Seeking easier methods to identify Africanized bees.

Be sure to keep an eye out for updates on these initiatives in upcoming issues of the *ABF Newsletter*.

Editor’s Note: If you believe that the ABF is heading in the right direction, please show your support with a donation. At the annual ABF business meeting in Orlando, those present pledged \$28,000 for legislative efforts. If you were not in Orlando, 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. In order to move forward, we must ask for your financial support. The legislative donation form is located on page 6 of this newsletter.





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Legislative Fund Contributions

The following ABF members contributed to the ABF Legislative Fund during the months of December 2009 and January 2010. These donations enable us to carry out the legislative initiatives that will benefit ABF members and the American beekeeping industry.

Alaska Heavenly Honey, Alaska

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Representatives

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United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Call: 202.225.3121
Ask for your representative's office
and request to speak to the agricultural aide.

Senate

Write: The Honorable _____
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Call: 202.224.3121
Ask for your senator's office and
request to speak to the agricultural aide.

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