

FROM YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Beehives Need to Behave

By: State Representative, STEVE HAMBLEY



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Ever since A.I. Root founded his company in 1869 revolutionizing beekeeping, Medina has been a Mecca of the bee industry. While promoting inventions that enhanced the mass production of honey, the company's *The ABC's of Bee Culture* and *Gleanings in Bee Culture* have documented the intellectual and physical development of the industry. As a State Representative for Medina County, any bill that crosses my desk involving bees and beekeeping naturally has my attention.

Recently, Rep. Dick Stein (R-57, Norwalk) and Rep. James Hoops (R-81, Napoleon) introduced HB 496, in which registered apiarists are provided limited immunity from lawsuits where a plaintiff

Ohio Senate. Both Representative Darrell Kick and I were co-sponsors of that bill as well as co-sponsors of the current version just introduced.

Aside from our historical connection to A.I. Root and the Beekeeping industry, why are the state representatives from Medina County so interested in bees? A simple one-word answer is – pollination. The modern beekeeping industry is more like a livestock business with a majority of beekeepers



The A.I. Root Company, Medina, Ohio.



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alleges a specific bee owned by a specific person caused them harm. This limitation of liability does not apply to intentional wrongdoing or gross negligence. The apiarist would have to not only be registered with the Ohio Department of Agriculture, but also operate in full compliance with local zoning ordinances and in conformity with best management practices. This bill passed the Ohio House in the previous 132nd General Assembly as Sub. H.B. 392, but stalled in the

nationwide earning nearly half their revenues from pollination services. Honeybees and native pollinators are crucial to agriculture, world food security, and genetic crop-diversity. According to the USDA, pollinators are responsible for one-third of all the food we eat. Despite their immense value, honeybees are dying at alarming rates—the US EPA estimates over 25% of all bees are afflicted by colony collapse disorder each year. Industry reports say that US honeybee

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populations are declining at an annual rate of 44 percent, while in 2018 Ohio beekeepers self-reported astonishing losses of 60% of the total number of hives in the state. Compounding the problem

is that there is no alternative for natural pollination—no replacement technology on the horizon.

Today, there are over 7,400 registered beekeepers in Ohio with more than 49,000 colonies. Incentivizing best management practices will help the Ohio Department of Agriculture track the spread of disease and work with our extension offices to develop solutions. It is the hope of the bill sponsor and co-sponsors that ODA management practices will also embolden municipalities to develop consistent zoning policy with this framework. Some cities

in Ohio actually prohibit beekeeping by classifying it as an “agricultural” activity, while others are silent on a growing movement to promote urban beekeeping. The intent of the legislation is to help promote the restoration of our honeybee population in the state.

Consider all of the economic and environmental benefits associated with a revived beekeeping industry that could be enjoyed by our children and grandchildren. I have often thought that, why wouldn't we want the future residents of Medina County to boast about living in the land of “Milk and Honey,” instead of merely identifying ourselves as “Buckeyes?” Just think how sweet that would be.



Steve Hambley is the Representative for the 69th district of the Ohio House of Representatives



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