

On February 23, 2010: Mike Sabo (Chairman, Legislative Committee, Illinois State Beekeepers Association), his 2 youngest daughters, and several ISBA members were sitting in the Agricultural Committee hoping to have SB 2959 move out of Committee. This is what Mike prepared to say:

Good Afternoon,

My name is Mike Sabo and I am the Chairman of the Legislative Committee for the Illinois State Beekeepers Association.

The Illinois State Beekeepers Association was organized in 1891. The purpose of the Illinois State Beekeepers Association is to promote interest in Honey Bees and Beekeeping by encouraging good beekeeping practices in Illinois, the utilization of Honey Bees for the pollination of agricultural crops and the dissemination of information about Honey Bees and beekeeping.

I come before you today, on behalf of the Illinois State Beekeepers Association, to express our organizations support of Senate Bill 2959. It is our organizations belief that passage of this legislation will benefit existing hobbyists encourage others to enter into the apicultural arts by reducing the barriers to entry and sunk costs established by current statute.

The Illinois Legislature has set the precedent of reducing such barriers by establishing multi-tier procedures separating large commercial operations from those engaged in direct retail sales. An example of this would be the license exemption in the Illinois Egg and Egg Products Act. The low pH, high osmolarity, and inherent antimicrobial constituents of honey in its unadulterated form means that it does not warrant the broad, all-inclusive and excessive regulations, currently in place.

Thank you. (end of short version)

Beekeepers with only a small number of hives play a significant, though often unseen, role in the Illinois economy. Fewer Beekeepers are managing fewer honey bee colonies leaving reduced numbers of honey bees to pollinate the 130 crops that rely upon Honey Bee pollination. Illinois vegetable and fruit producers depend upon Illinois Beekeepers to keep and maintain 19,000 colonies. The number of Beekeepers in Illinois has declined precipitously from 2,966 in 1988 to 1,329 in 2007.

As I conclude, I'd like to take a moment to quote to you some thoughts of business people from around the state.

Dadant & Sons, Inc. is in Hamilton, Illinois and supplies equipment to beekeepers. By far, hobby beekeepers make up the bulk of our customers. I'd say 90% of our clients have 25 or fewer hives

Allison Babcock, owner of Allisons Common Scents, a small retail store on Main Street of Belleville, Illinois. Over the past few years we have been purchasing local honey by the case for sale in our retail business. People purchase this honey for anything from cooking to adding to their tea for allergy purposes. Customers prefer raw local honey for therapeutic purposes as well as for flavor. Purchasing local also keeps our money local and supports the local bee keeping industry as a whole.

Norm Geolat has been a Market Master at a several farmers markets for the past eleven years. Honey at a farmers market is very important. It is a wholesome, homemade food made by the bees. Honey is easy to sell and easy to display. A market should not be without a beekeeper.