

TENNESSEAN COM

Bill seeks to protect beekeepers from sting of lawsuits

Written by

Kevin Walters
THE TENNESSEAN

5:02 PM, Feb. 25, 2011

FRANKLIN — Williamson County legislators have waded into a bit of a hornet's nest with the state legislature this year, but one of the easier items of business they hope to accomplish could take some of the sting out of possible lawsuits against Tennessee beekeepers.

Rep. Glen Casada and Sen. Jack Johnson are separately sponsoring bills in the General Assembly that would provide beekeepers immunity from lawsuits seeking compensation for personal injuries and/or property damage that might occur in connection with beekeeping, so long as the beekeepers' conduct is not intentional or grossly negligent.

"It's to make it easier for beekeepers to stay in business," Casada said.

Given the plethora of hot topics facing legislators this year, such as a state budget hindered by dwindling sales tax returns and questions about the education system, beekeeping seems to be a minor concern.

So, why the — ahem — sweet spot for beekeepers?

Neither Casada nor Johnson are [apiarists](#) (beekeepers) themselves, but Casada said he was approached at a recent meeting with constituents about sponsoring the legislation, and he decided to pursue it. He had worked years ago on other beekeeping-related legislation.

Johnson is introducing the Senate version of the bill and referred comment about the beekeeping bill to Casada.

[State Beekeepers Association](#) President Jim Garrison said lawsuits involving bee-related injuries are infrequent, but removing the threat of lawsuits would be helpful.

There are about 1,000 beekeepers in the association.

"In the very litigious society that you live in, you never know when somebody is going to get crazy when they get stung," Garrison said. "We can't control where the bees fly."

The personal injury bill is one of two that

Advertisement



USA TODAY
AutoPilot 
The new travel app for iPhone® and iPod touch®
Presented by: 
SEE HOW IT WORKS »

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

TENNESSEAN COM

state beekeepers are pushing this year in the legislature, including one introduced in the house by Rep. Judd Matheny that prohibits local governments from placing restrictions on the keeping of honeybees in hives.

Both bills come at a time when the honeybee population, which plays an essential role in the pollination of crops, has been hard hit by disease.

Interestingly, more people seem to be taking up beekeeping in an attempt to increase the bee population.

Jim Primus, who is a beekeeper and teaches a beekeeping course, says he's seen an increase in people interested in learning about beekeeping since news has spread about the decline in the bee population. Primus worked on the proposed legislation and had worked with Casada in the past.

By lessening what kinds of lawsuits beekeepers face, Primus said he hopes even more will take up beekeeping.

"It's to encourage people to get into beekeeping," Primus said. "We're losing the bees. We're losing a lot of beekeepers."

Contact Kevin Walters at 615-771-5472 or kewalters@tennessean.com.

Advertisement



USA TODAY
AutoPilot 
 The new travel app for iPhone® and iPod touch®
 Presented by: 
SEE HOW IT WORKS >>

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™