

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2172

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### As Reported By House Committee On:

Agriculture & Ecology

**Title:** An act relating to removing a fee on the use of bees for pollination services.

**Brief Description:** Removing a fee on the use of bees for pollination services.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Chandler, Mielke and Mastin.

### Brief History:

#### Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Ecology: 3/3/97 [DP].

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ECOLOGY

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Chandler, Chairman; Parlette, Vice Chairman; Schoesler, Vice Chairman; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cooper; Delvin; Koster; Mastin and Sump.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Linville, Ranking Minority Member; and Regala.

**Staff:** Kenneth Hirst (786-7105).

**Background:** In 1994, a pollination service fee was established by statute. It is levied on the use, by growers of agricultural crops, of bee pollination services provided by others. The fee is in the amount of 50 cents for each setting of each hive containing a colony that is used by the grower. The fee is paid by the grower using the service, collected by the beekeeper, and remitted to the Department of Agriculture. All such fees are deposited in the Industry Apiary Program Account and revenues from the fees are to be used in providing services to the apiary industry that assist in ensuring the vitality and availability of bees for commercial pollination services for the agricultural industry.

**Summary of Bill:** The pollination service fee is repealed.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 26, 1997.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** (1) The commercial bee industry in the state is under stress. Since 1986, the number of its bee colonies has declined by approximately two-thirds, and the federal support program for honey has fallen. This pollination service fee is an additional burden. It should be repealed and the department's administration of it should be investigated. (2) The financial records of the department's apiary program should be disclosed. (3) Commercial bee keepers, not hobbyists or sideliners, should determine apiary program policy. (4) Commercial beekeepers do not need help from anyone.

**Testimony Against:** (1) If the fee is removed, the department is not in a position to employ anyone in the program. Therefore, if the fee is repealed, the rest of the department's program should be repealed as well. (2) Disease control is a serious problem. Without controls, an infected hive can be placed near a healthy one and wipe the healthy one out.

**Testified:** Paul Schlenvogt, Washington Professional Beekeepers Association (pro); Ivan Whibben, Washington Professional Beekeepers Association (pro); Rob Jackman, Washington Professional Beekeeper Association (pro); Jim Halstrom, Washington State Horticultural Association (comment); Glen McCabins, Washington Professional Beekeeper Association (pro); Bob Zohler, Washington Professional Beekeeper Association (con); Kenneth Fisby (pro); and Mary Beth Lang, Department of Agriculture (commented on the bill).