

SENATE AGRICULTURE

EXHIBIT NO. 9

DATE 2/12/13

BILL NO. SB 216

February 12, 2013
To Whom It May Concern:

Senate Bill Number 216

Montana beekeepers ask that this bill not be considered any further in the legislation process. It adversely affects the fair and rational regulations currently in place in regards to beekeepers and their hives. Montana beekeepers register each apiary site through the state and are protected by law. Bill 216 excludes this law and would allow any beekeeper from any place to put their hives in any location in Montana. Bill 216 would take away the site-registration process and give opportunity for competing commercial beekeepers and unqualified amateur beekeepers to put their beehives in close proximity to established beekeepers' hives. This would not only cause personal conflict between competing beekeepers, but each beekeeper would lose income from reduced honey production, areas of land would be oversaturated with beehives, and honey bee diseases would be more easily spread.

Although commercial beekeepers earn millions for the agricultural economy of Montana, they have a low profit margin due to the high cost of running a beekeeping business. The commercial beekeeper needs each apiary site they have had for generations in order for their business to survive and to support themselves and their families.

Please throw out this bill for the sake of the livelihood of Montana Beekeepers and Montana's strength in the agricultural economy.

Thank you.
Sincerely,

Bert Wustner, owner of Bert and the Bees, Lolo, MT
Jake Wustner, co-owner of Wustner Brothers Honey, Missoula, MT
Sam Wustner, co-owner of Wustner Brothers Honey, Missoula, MT