



THREE NEW LAWS PROTECT JERSEY BEES

Three bipartisan bills supporting beekeepers in New Jersey became law in late July. Honey bees are New Jersey's official insect and are central to successful farming in our State.

According to the Department of Agriculture, more than 80 percent of US food crops are pollinated by bees. In New Jersey, pollinators are crucial for the State's blueberry, cranberry, pumpkin, squash, strawberry, peach and apple crops as well as a wide variety of annual and perennial flowers and tree species. In addition to honey bees, New Jersey's more than 3,000 registered beekeepers also tend other bee species that are critical to crop pollination, including mason and bumble bees. "These bills will aid commercial beekeepers in continuing to provide vital pollinations services and give clear, enforceable guidance to municipalities," said NJ Beekeepers Association President Janet A. Katz at the official bill signing. "We are confident that these bills will free our organization and the Department of Agriculture to focus on educating the public on the vital role our State insect plays in New Jersey agriculture and in providing our membership and all New Jersey beekeepers with the tools and guidance to be good beekeepers and neighbors."

The new bills, which were unanimously passed in both the Senate and Assembly, include:

- A-1294 (Dancer, Space, Andrezejczak, Caride/Van Drew, Oroho) – Extends Right to Farm Act protections to commercial beekeepers, with some restrictions. This means that any nuisance complaints against commercial beekeepers would go to a county agricultural board rather than a municipal court. The board would better understand beekeeping issues, and it would be less costly than appearing in court.
- A-1295 (Dancer, Space, Andrezejczak, Caride/Van Drew, Oroho) – Establishes exclusive State regulatory authority over apiary activities and allows for delegation of monitoring and enforcement authority to municipalities.
- A-1296 (Dancer, Space, Caride/Van Drew, Cruz-Perez) – Establishes a penalty for destruction of man-made native bee hives. Some hives are built to attract bee species native to New Jersey that pollinate crops or plants but don't produce honey. Anyone who intentionally destroys a manmade native bee hive could be fined up to \$500.

To read these bills, go to <https://legiscan.com/NJ>