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SENATORS INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO PROTECT AND MAINTAIN AMERICA'S BEES AND NATIVE POLLINATORS

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA), John Thune (R-SD) and Bob Casey (D-PA) today introduced legislation to help research, protect and maintain America's bee and native pollinator population and ensure the viability of crops that rely on them for pollination.

In recent months, there has been an estimated loss of over 25 percent of the nation's honeybee population—a decrease the USDA has termed 'Colony Collapse Disorder.'

The Pollinator Protection Act would authorize \$89 million in federal funding for research and grant programs at the USDA over five years for work related to maintaining and protecting our bee and native pollinator populations. Experts estimate crops nationwide that depend on a healthy honey and native bee population to be valued near \$18 billion.

"California's almond crop alone is worth \$2 billion per year and requires nearly one half all the honey bees in the country," Senator Boxer said. "The future of that crop and other important crops such as avocados, apples, berries and soybeans is in jeopardy if there aren't enough bees to pollinate them for harvest."

"South Dakota is the fourth largest honey producing state, and the majority of our bees are critical to the pollination of many food and feed crops across the nation," Senator Thune said. "The additional funding authorized by this bill for colony collapse disorder research and other honeybee-related problems would be a sound investment in our nation's agriculture and would ensure continuation of a safe and inexpensive food supply."

"Pennsylvania's apple growers are particularly concerned about the effects of this disorder—90 percent of apple pollination comes from honeybees," said Senator Casey. "This bill is critically important to the future of Pennsylvania's apple growers as well as the entire agriculture industry. I look forward to working with Senator Boxer and Senator Thune to protect our

nation's pollinator population."

In May, the Senators sent a letter along with 37 of their Senate colleagues to USDA encouraging the agency to take steps to increase Colony Collapse Disorder research. This legislation would provide USDA with the support and resources to do so on a sustained basis.

Senator Boxer added, "It is my hope that this legislation will help protect beekeepers, farmers and consumers from any harmful consequences, financial and otherwise, of colony collapse disorder and declines in native pollinator populations."

Also cosponsoring the legislation are Senators Hillary Clinton, Bill Nelson, Robert Menendez, Richard Durbin, Sherrod Brown, and John Kerry. The bill is similar to legislation first introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman Alcee Hastings (D-FL).

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