

WHY THE HONEY BEE SHOULD BE NAMED THE STATE'S POLLINATOR SUPPORT HB 517 (Del. Hope) IN 2024

- ⇒ Virginians support the idea! Over 1,000 have signed petitions in support of HB 517.ⁱ
- ⇒ Western honey bees – *Apis mellifera* – that were brought to Virginia in 1622 are believed to have originated in central Asia and naturally migrated throughout northern Europe after the last ice age where they proliferated in the wild.ⁱⁱ
- ⇒ In 1622, the King of England responded to the colonists' requests for additional food sources by sending them honey bee colonies, which were the first documented honey bee colonies to arrive in North America.ⁱⁱⁱ
- ⇒ Nineteen states already designate the *Apis mellifera*, recognizing its value.^{iv}
- ⇒ Southern states that designate the honey bee include Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia. Some of these states designate the *Apis mellifera* as the “state agricultural insect,” and others as the “state insect.”^v
- ⇒ Not all designated animals in Virginia's Code now are native to Virginia yet are so designated because of their significance to Virginians. These two were also brought to Virginia by colonists from Europe.
 - State Beverage – Milk (first cattle brought to Virginia in 1609-1610).^{vi}
 - State Dog – American Foxhound (brought to Virginia in a pack in 1650).^{vii}
- ⇒ Honey bees are good for business. In 2022, pollination services brought in \$241 million to the national economy, and honey producers reported 125 million lbs. Honey prices rose 12%.^{viii}
- ⇒ Researchers estimate that one out of every three bites of our food, including fruits, vegetables, chocolate, coffee, nuts, and spices, is created with the help of pollinators, including honey bees.^{ix}
- ⇒ Others estimate that without pollinators, our food supply would be significantly impacted; the largest threat is the use of pesticides, not competition among pollinators.^x
- ⇒ Where honey bees and other local bees are interested in the same plants, pollination has been documented as complimentary, double the rates, and more food and seed produced.^{xi}
- ⇒ Over 100 foods in the U.S. are pollinated by honey bees. Economically, foods pollinated by honey bees and other local bees are an enormous part of the agricultural assets; the value of foods grown and pollinated by honey bees in the U.S. is estimated at \$15 billion each year.^{xii}

- ⇒ Honey bees are the only bee that, because it lives in large colonies that do not die over winter, produces the large honey crops needed to feed each colony throughout the year. Honey can be made by the honey bees in sufficient quantities to allow excess amounts to be used by humans without harming the honey bees.^{xiii}
- ⇒ Threats to all pollinators could reduce food supplies, and include the use of insecticides, fungicides, habitat shrinkage, loss of biodiversity, and other stressors.^{xiv}

ⁱ The Virginia State Beekeepers Association (VSBA) has petitions with both penned and electronic signatures.

ⁱⁱ <https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=51095>.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.13newsnow.com/article/news/history/400-years-ago-honeybees-arrived-north-america/291-1800f1bc-a40a-439a-8872-49a79191e5d5>.

^{iv} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_U.S._state_insects.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} <https://www.newsleader.com/story/news/history/2015/10/16/vas-bovine-beginnings-legend-bob-ox/74077146/>. “. . . Jamestown archaeologists did find a bovine bone in a 1610 pit so we can document the existence of bovines in Virginia from 1610 forward. Those first Virginia cattle did NOT thrive. They struggled so much to live that for a short time it was even a capital crime in Virginia to kill a cow. But within a couple of decades there were literally thousands of cattle in the colony. So many, in fact, that Virginia was exporting cattle to the Caribbean. Why the change? The working theory right now is that cattle arrived in the New World without a good food source that grew in Virginia. But the seeds of grasses and plants from the Old World came on board the ships in the piles of food and bedding brought to help the cattle make the crossing. There were also seeds in the animals’ coats. As soon as those plants started growing in Virginia and spread rapidly, so too did the cattle because they had something to eat. By the 1630s the transformation was nearly complete and cattle and Old-World plants were here to stay.”

^{vii} <https://lansdowneanimalhospital.com/2015/03/01/leesburg-vet-american-foxhound/>.

^{viii} <https://www.beeeculture.com/u-s-honey-industry-report-2022/>.

^{ix} <https://www.farmers.gov/blog/value-birds-and-bees>.

^x <https://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/issues/304/pollinator-protection/impacts-on-the-food-supply> and <https://www.foxnews.com/food-drink/10-crops-that-would-disappear-without-bees>.

^{xi} <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0304423817301590>.

^{xii} <https://www.usda.gov/peoples-garden/pollinators/honey-bees>.

^{xiii} <https://environmentamerica.org/center/articles/do-all-bees-make-honey/>. Some native bees do make a honey-like substances, but only in small quantities to feed upon for a couple of days during bad weather.

^{xiv} <https://www.sei.org/features/global-assessment-highlights-threats-to-pollinators-that-are-vital-to-food-supply/>.