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FLOOR DEBATE

February 26, 2004 LB 835

Agriculture Committee, advanced to General File. I have no amendments at this time, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT HEINEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. The Chair recognizes Senator Kremer.

SENATOR KREMER: Thank you, Mr. Lieutenant Governor and members of the Legislature. LB 835 is a bill brought to us by the Department of Agriculture to bring the department's statutory duties under the Nebraska Apiary Act in line with the decline in resources available to the department to carry out the program, and the resulting level of enforcement activity that is currently taking place. A little background: The Apiary Act was first enacted in 1929, and the purpose was to safeguard the state's indigenous honey industry from disease, parasites and pests, and to regulate the entry of mobile commercial apiarists that assist in the pollinating of some of the crops. The current duties of the act...or the Department of Agriculture under the act are they have to have an annual registration of bee colonies. They enter permits to bring bee colonies into the state. The health certificate requires prior to the sale of 25 or more bee colonies. The department has to perform an annual health inspection of registered bee colonies, and they have to enforce requirements that bee colonies entering the state be accompanied by a health certificate. The department also has the authority to quarantine and destroy infected colonies. Some of the recent changes in the act was LB 436, which was enacted in 2001. It eliminated the registration fee and requirements for health certificates for sale of 25 or more bee colonies. The department continues to perform inspections when they are voluntarily requested. The funding mechanism in the past has always been that it was a...inspection fees and registration fees and General Funds, but during the current fiscal downturn the General Funds have been eliminated, and also bee colonies are half of what they were and also the number of apiaries is about two-thirds of what they were at one time. And the Department of Agriculture no longer employs a full-time apiarist. The bill does several things. It strikes several sections eliminating the requirement for entry permits into the state, and harmonizes the deletions in other areas of the bill. Section 9 of the bill outright repeals Section 81-2,177.01,