

GROWERTALKS

SAF in the Lobby

9/15/2010

SAF Supports Workplace Safety; Opposes New Changes to OSHA

The Society of American Florists

A group that represents employers' interests sent a letter expressing disappointment in proposed legislation that could tie the hands of small businesses.

The Coalition for Workplace Safety (CWS), of which SAF is a member, advocates for improved workplace safety through cooperation, assistance, transparency, clarity and accountability. CWS opposes the "Robert C. Byrd Miner Safety and Health Act of 2010" (H.R. 5663) because the legislation would alter the OSHA Act and could hurt many floral industry businesses. Instead of helping employers comply with safety programs, the bill increases penalties and enforcement. Most employers understand the need to improve and upgrade workplace safety, but they need help navigating complicated OSHA regulations.

The House Education and Labor Committee, led by Chairman George Miller (D-7-Calif.), passed the bill out of committee on July 29.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, from 1994 to 2008, the reportable case rates for workplace injuries and illnesses decreased by half. Some members of Congress, however, are focused on increased criminal penalties and litigation, not on helping small businesses and OSHA develop a collaborative relationship. Instead H.R. 5663 will create an adversarial relationship between small-business owners and OSHA.

SAF will continue to keep you posted about the progress of this legislation. SAF believes that OSHA should be a resource for employers, as well as an enforcement agency. **GT**

AgJOBS and DREAM Act—Fall Votes Possible

Even as the Senate is in the midst of its long summer recess, momentum is growing for a strategy to get AgJOBS and the DREAM Act to the floor when Congress returns.

SAF is working with Sen. Diane Feinstein (D-Calif.) and her staff to pass AgJOBS this year. AgJOBS is the bipartisan legislation SAF and others in the agricultural community have long supported. The bill would

streamline the H-2A agricultural visa program and provide earned legalization to currently trained and trusted farm workers, provided they fulfill a two-year prospective work requirement in the fields.

The DREAM Act is likely to be coupled with AGJOBS in an effort to garner support and assuage the disappointment of Hispanic groups who had hoped for more expansive reform. The DREAM Act would give legal status to the children of illegal immigrants who attend college or join the armed forces.

AgJOBS also received good press in Roll Call, a daily Capitol Hill newspaper. Editor Mort Kondracke argued for AgJOBS as a first step toward comprehensive reform. The story also described Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's (D-Nev.) position as leaning toward a "down-payment" measure. **GT**

In Reform Bill Passage, A Victory for Small Businesses

When President Obama signed the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform bill on July 21, he provided small businesses with some assurance that they will be treated fairly under new consumer financial regulations.

Buried in the bill was an SAF-supported amendment championed by Sens. Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) and Mark Pryor (D-Ark.). The amendment subjects the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) to the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act (SBREFA). Under SBREFA, if an agency proposes a regulation that could "have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities," that agency must convene a panel of small-business experts for advice before moving forward.

SBREFA authorizes regulators to amend a proposed rule to reduce the burden on small business while still achieving the objective of the regulation. Regulators could, for instance, delay implementation of a regulation, reduce paperwork requirements or reduce noncompliance penalties.

The amendment is a clear win for small businesses in the floral industry, said SAF's Senior Directory of Government Relations Jeanne Ramsay.

"SAF vigorously supported the Snowe-Pryor amendment because we believe the new CFPB must take into consideration the economic impact of its proposals on the small-business community," Ramsay said. **GT**

Capitol Hill Newcomers Will Need an SAF Welcome

Election Day 2010 is coming fast and furiously, and that means a new class of elected officials will be descending on Capitol Hill next January.

As the primaries in the Senate races in Colorado and Pennsylvania have shown, incumbents aren't in the same safe position they have been in past election years. Those tenuous positions, combined with several retirements, mean many new members will be ushered into office with a whole platter of issues for them to address, including two that directly affect growers: Immigration reform and estate tax reform.

SAF will be making its position on those issues heard—by incumbents and freshmen alike—during the 31st Annual SAF Congressional Action Days, March 14-15, 2011, in Washington, D.C.

Newcomers will have minimal knowledge of floral industry issues, which makes participation in March paramount. Only floral industry members can convey to senators and representatives how their decisions affect daily business. For more information about Congressional Action Days 2011, contact Brian Gamberini at (800) 336-4743 or e-mail ActionDays@safnow.org. **GT**

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