

# GROWERTALKS

## GT in Brief

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### California Cut Flower Commission Suspended; Certified American Grown to Take Over

*Chris Beytes*

In a referendum back in April, California's cut flower segment voted to suspend operation of the state's Cut Flower Commission (CCFC) as of December 31. By law, every five years the CCFC must be approved by a majority of eligible producers to keep operating. In the referendum, 36 of the 44 eligible producers voted. Twenty-one opposed keeping the Commission going, while only 15 wanted to keep it alive—not a landslide defeat (58% to 42%), but enough to end the Commission's 30-year run.

Why the failure? Lack of focus by the organization and a decline in participation by members—whose numbers were dwindling, says Dave Pruitt, CEO of CCFC (and one of the founders of the group, which got its start in 1990).

When one door closes, another opens, and that door is Certified American Grown (CAG). CAG was a marketing arm of CCFC that hosted events like Field to Vase and the First Lady's Luncheon. Now Dave and a group of founding board members are converting Certified American Grown into a bona fide cut flower 501(c)(6) trade association that will represent cut flower growers across America, continuing with Washington lobbying efforts and marketing functions like Field to Vase.

The new organization—the first new flower trade association since AmericanHort was formed by the merger of ANLA and OFA—launched in August with 70 or so founding members. The first Chairperson of the Board will be Rita Jo Schoultz of Alaska Perfect Peony. **GT**