

# GROWERTALKS

JZ on D.C.

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## Plantpeddler Honored for Supporting Ag Education

Jennifer Zurko



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Congratulations to Mike, Rachel and John Gooder, and everyone at Plantpeddler of Cresco, Iowa, for being honored by the state for supporting agricultural education.

*Pictured: The Plantpeddler crew with Governor Kim Reynolds (in pink).*

At the 12th Annual Ag Leader Awards on March 19, Plantpeddler was recognized for Leadership in Agriculture Education. This award was based on years of supporting horticulture in schools, the Department of Horticulture at Iowa State University and most recently for hosting the nation's first "Educate the Educators" Ag Educators Workshop. Present at the ceremony were Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds and Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig.

Two days later, on March 21, Plantpeddler again was involved with the state's political leadership, hosting Iowa Attorney General (AG) Brenna Bird for a greenhouse facility tour and discussion with the Plantpeddler team.

During the tour of both Plantpeddler production sites, the discussion covered a variety of topics, including horticulture's role in value-added agriculture, the opportunities to diversify and grow production within the state, and risk management for growers.

—Chris Beytes

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## AG Labor Working Group Releases Final Report

The House Agriculture Committee, led by Chairman GT Thompson (R-PA-15) and Ranking Member David Scott (D-GA-13), released the final report from the Agricultural Labor Working Group (ALWG). The ALWG was led by Co-Chairs Rep. Rick Crawford (R-AR-01) and Rep. Don Davis (D-NC-01). The final report is the product of a months-long effort to identify workforce challenges facing the agricultural industry and propose potential legislative solutions. AmericanHort contributed to this effort by meeting with Members of Congress, staff and the Committee.

AmericanHort President & CEO Ken Fisher is quoted in a press release about the report: "AmericanHort commends

the House Agriculture Committee for establishing the Agricultural Labor Working Group and applauds the group's efforts to improve the availability of labor through programs like H-2A, which has been a critical program for the agriculture and horticulture industries. We encourage the group to continue to advocate for policies that improve the H-2A and H-2B programs, particularly in reforming the Adverse Effect Wage Rate policies and granting year-round industries access to the H-2A program.”

—Matt Mika, VP of Advocacy & Government Affairs, AmericanHort

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## OSHA Issues Final Worker Walkaround Representative Designation Process Rule

On April 1, 2024, the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) released a final rule stating that workers may designate a third party, who's not an employee, as their representative during OSHA inspections. This rule, effective May 31, 2024, amends 29 C.F.R.

§ 1903.8(c) by making two key changes:

1. Workers can now choose a third-party representative who's not an employee or another employee during inspections.
2. The rule no longer mandates that only individuals with official credentials, such as industrial hygienists or safety engineers, can serve as non-employee representatives. A Compliance Safety and Health Officer (CSHO) can permit a non-employee representative to join an inspection if they can assist in conducting a thorough physical inspection.

The new rule specifies that representatives authorized by employees may be either employees of the employer or third parties. If the representative isn't an employee of the employer, they may accompany the CSHO during the inspection if the CSHO determines that there's good cause for their accompaniment, such as relevant knowledge, skills, experience with hazards, language skills or communication skills.

Employers cannot object to the selection of non-employee representatives, and if they refuse, the CSHO can obtain a warrant for the inspection. Non-employee representatives, regardless of union affiliation, can accompany CSHOs during inspections if necessary. Employers are required to have written procedures for OSHA inspectors accessing job sites and responding to non-employee representatives.

See OSHA's FAQ guidance document [HERE](#).

—Frida Mendez, DCLRS

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## Floral Pros Attend SAF's First Congressional Fly-in of the Year

On March 19, 13 floral retailers, wholesalers, growers and importers convened on Capitol Hill for the Society of American Florists' (SAF) first congressional fly-in of 2024. Led by SAF Senior Lobbyist Joe Bischoff and Associate Macey Hammerstrom, the group advocated for legislative actions that could provide more affordable access to cut flowers, improve crop insurance for flower farms, and fund research to improve flower and plant quality, and production.

During the event, attendees visited with 11 congressional offices, including those of Senator Marco Rubio and Representatives Marcy Kaptur, Adrian Smith, Dan Kildee, Mario Diaz-Balart, Gwen Moore, Henry Cuellar, Lori Chavez-DeRemer, Andreas Salinas, Scott Franklin and John Carter.

Attendees focused on lobbying for three floral industry priorities:

- Reauthorization of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP): Aimed at reinstating duty-free imports from economically developed countries and easing financial burdens exacerbated by the lapse of GSP authorization in December 2020.
- Establishing a National Crop Insurance Program through the USDA's Risk Management Agency for outdoor cut flower production to help farmers protect their businesses from increasing risks due to extreme weather and wildfires.
- Increased Funding for Floriculture & Nursery Research Initiative (FNRI): SAF is seeking an additional \$1 million to support research efforts in mechanization, pest and disease management, postharvest optimization and production efficiencies.

Reflecting on the day of meetings, Lottie McKinnon of Teleflora emphasized the receptiveness of legislative aides.

"It was awesome," she said. "[The aide] was very engaged and interested in what we had to say... and definitely seemed like he wanted to help."

Joe said the facetime with the industry will help him continue to make a case for our issues.

"These conversations go a long way toward helping them really understand why these issues are so important to our industry's businesses," he said. "It really helps strengthen our case."

—Elizabeth Daly, SAF

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## House Ag Appropriations Questions Sec. Vilsack

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack testified before the House Agriculture Appropriations Committee in March to discuss the USDA budget for FY2025. While many issues were discussed, a good portion of intense dialogue focused on agricultural labor and the workforce.

Our champions in this space—Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-WA-04), Rep. John Moolenaar (R-MI-02) and Rep. David Valadao (R-CA-22)—led the discussions on Adverse Effect Wage Rates (AEWR), the Farm Workforce Modernization Act and the United Farm Workers (UFW) union interventions in hiring practices abusing COVID-19 funding from the USDA.

AmericanHort supports the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, fixing and freezing the AEWR rate and discovering illegal practices involving UFW.

—Matt Mika

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## Senators Express the Importance of American Agriculture

On Tuesday, March 26, the World Food Prize Foundation hosted the inaugural DialogueNext conversation in Washington, D.C., at the U.S. Institute of Peace. DialogueNext seeks to bring in agricultural advocates at the state, national and global levels to elevate innovation and inspire action in the agricultural sector.

Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA) and Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) engaged in a fireside chat with Assistant Secretary of State for Economic & Business Affairs Ramin Toloui. Both Senators expressed the critical roles research and innovation play in advancing agriculture and the need for legacy and succession planning, as the average age of farmers, ranchers, producers and growers is 57.5 years old. Chair Stabenow also mentioned the importance of having a strong Farm Bill, yet didn't signal any movement (or lack thereof) for the 2023 Farm Bill.

—Matt Mika

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