

GROWERTALKS

JZ on D.C.

6/30/2025

Two Days in D.C. With the AmericanHort Advocacy Team

Jennifer Zurko

The Damm Corporation has been working with AmericanHort for the past couple of years to address an issue within the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that we saw impacting the horticultural industry. In April, I had the pleasure of visiting Washington, D.C., to collaborate with the AmericanHort team to continue work on this issue. I wanted to describe these two days and highlight the work of the AmericanHort Advocacy team of Matt Mika, Kamron Newberry and Rachel Pick.

A few weeks before my visit, I was alerted by the AmericanHort team that they'd been coordinating with EPA staff to schedule a meeting in Washington. As we started to make plans for the visit, the team began adding appointments to the schedule, all designed to build support and consensus around the issue. By the time I arrived in Washington, we had two full days of meetings arranged with several Congressional offices, staff at the House Agricultural Committee and USDA.

After arriving in Washington, we met for lunch to coordinate our approach with EPA. To help, the AmericanHort team brought in Laurie Flanagan, a consultant that works on legislative and regulatory issues. When our strategizing was complete, we walked to the EPA offices.

After a thorough security check, we met with several EPA staff members and had good discussions to look for common ground. The AmericanHort team, along with Laurie, were very good at guiding the discussion and showing that we were there to educate on the impacts and potential unintended consequences of this regulation. By the end of the meeting, we felt there was a direction we could work with to clarify the policy.

After the main meeting, we moved to Capitol Hill. As we wound through the labyrinth in and under the three House office buildings, it was evident that the team had a strong lay of the land. In meeting after meeting, the team made introductions and described the reason we were in town. In each case, there was a great deal of support and suggestions offered by Congressional staff on how to further address the issue. The relationships that Matt, Rachel and Kamron have developed with those in government was impressive. It was evident in the conversations how important this will be in addressing our immediate concerns, but also, the many other issues our industry faces.

During each meeting, we focused on our primary agenda while also addressing additional issues impacting the

horticulture industry. Matt and the team effectively utilized our time on Capitol Hill to advocate for the industry's positions on critical matters, including the need for a stable migrant labor workforce and the importance of a Farm Bill that supports specialty crop industries like ours. Programs such as H-2A and H-2B are essential to the success of our growers. With public discussions increasingly centered on providing aid to farmers affected by tariffs, there's a risk that the significant benefits the Farm Bill provides to specialty crops—such as funding for industry research and access to crop insurance—could be overlooked. The team ensured that policymakers clearly understood the industry's priorities and proactively offered ideas and cooperation to support the legislative process.

Regarding tariffs specifically, the team emphasized the need for Congress to understand the impact tariffs have on small businesses like Dramm and its customers, and highlighted the broader industry effects. Earlier in the year, AmericanHort played a key role in securing tariff exemptions for critical inputs such as Canadian peat moss and unrooted cuttings from Mexico.

During our meetings, the team consistently stressed the negative consequences that tariffs would have on American businesses dependent on plant material from Guatemala and Costa Rica. They also raised concerns about the potential impact of federal workforce attrition, particularly APHIS retirements, which could lead to delays at ports and jeopardize the viability of perishable plant materials. The conversation addressed tariffs on steel and aluminum, two major structural components essential to Dramm's operations and greenhouse construction in general.

My time in Washington clearly illustrated how influential and effective our team of advocates are in our nation's capital. It also made me realize that much of our industry is unaware of this fact. AmericanHort has invested in a talented team to help advance ornamental horticulture in D.C. Membership and Cultivate pay for these efforts. Every grower and industry supplier benefits.

If these results are important to you, consider joining or increasing your membership level. Additionally, plan to participate in their biennial Impact Washington Fly-In Summit in September (more on that below). While the team's relationships are a key to their success, being able to highlight citizens' and constituents' concerns over legislation and regulation helps show relevance and gets attention from those on the Hill.

—Kurt Becker, Dramm Corporation

Be a Voice for Our Industry at the Impact Washington Summit

The timing for AmericanHort's biennial fly-in event Impact Washington couldn't be better. With a new administration, new cabinet members and constantly changing policy trajectories, it's more than important than ever to get in front of your representatives to let them know how these policies affect your business.

The Impact Washington Fly-in Summit will be held from September 15-17 in our nation's capital. You'll hear directly from elected leaders, their staff and policy experts on key issues that shape our industry's green businesses, including labor and workforce, the Farm Bill, specialty crop research, tax issues, and regulation and compliance.

You'll also have a chance to attend AmericanHort's non-partisan Political Action Committee (PAC) dinner with featured guest Rep. Dusty Johnson (R-SD). Rep. Johnson is a member of key committees, including Agriculture, Transportation & Infrastructure, and the Select Committee on China. He's been active in addressing supply chain challenges, transportation reform and safeguarding U.S. agricultural interests from foreign threats, particularly from

China. (A minimum donation is required to attend the dinner.)

AmericanHort has secured a special rate at the Holiday Inn Washington Capital-National Mall. For more information and to register, go to americanhort.org/impact-washington-summit. And for information about the PAC dinner, contact Matt Mika at MattM@AmericanHort.org.

—Jennifer Zurko

House GOP Tax and Spending Plan Raises Stakes for Horticulture Industry

The House committees are advancing their parts of the reconciliation package of President Trump's economic agenda, including making the 2017 tax cuts permanent, introducing tax-free savings accounts for youth, and exempting tips and overtime pay from taxes. The plan proposes at least \$1.5 trillion in federal spending cuts to offset costs, targeting programs such as Medicaid, SNAP and energy initiatives.

Many committees, including the House Agriculture Committee, have held hearings regarding their legislative priorities in reconciliation legislation. The Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance, of which AmericanHort is on the steering committee, issued a statement following the release of the Committee's draft text.

Ken Fisher, AmericanHort President & CEO, made the following remarks: "AmericanHort commends Chairman GT Thompson and the House Agriculture Committee for their leadership and diligence in assembling an agriculture package as part of the Reconciliation Bill. While our preference remains the passage of a comprehensive 2025 Farm Bill, we recognize this as an important step in that direction and appreciate the Committee's efforts to advance the legislative process. While our industry's most pressing concerns remain the availability and cost of labor, we are encouraged by the inclusion of provisions aimed at supporting specialty crops and especially value the recognition given to the horticultural sector. As the process continues, AmericanHort is committed to working collaboratively with Chairman Thompson and the Committee to ensure the needs of our industry are addressed."

Senate Republicans are preparing their version—which may significantly revise the House GOP's reconciliation package, particularly on tax, health care and agriculture provisions—to satisfy Senate rules and internal divisions. While both chambers aim to align broadly on policy, changes are expected on issues like clean energy tax credit repeals, Medicaid reforms and the SALT deduction cap, with final Senate adjustments likely determining the package's viability ahead of the mid-July debt limit deadline.

—Rachel Pick, AmericanHort

The MAHA Report Takes Aim at Pesticides

The Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Commission's report released in May sparked backlash from agriculture groups who say it unfairly questions the safety of pesticides like glyphosate and atrazine despite decades of scientific evaluation and EPA oversight. Agriculture groups are condemning the report as fear-based and unscientific, warning it could erode consumer trust and fuel litigation.

While consumer health advocates welcomed parts of the report, some argued it didn't go far enough in addressing pesticide risks, illustrating a deep divide over how best to promote public health without undermining U.S. agriculture.

As per Executive Order 14212, the MAHA Commission is now tasked with developing a strategy for the federal government's response. The report indicates this strategy is due in August 2025. The agricultural industry and the House and Senate Agriculture Committees were not consulted about the MAHA Commission report before its release.

AmericanHort, in conjunction with the Pesticide Policy Coalition, is determining next steps for advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill and in the Trump Administration about the impact limiting access to pesticides would have on the horticulture industry.

— *Rachel Pick & Kamron Newberry, AmericanHort*

*News, views, commentary and event coverage about the policies and legislation that directly affect our industry.
Share your thoughts, opinions and news with me: jzurko@ballpublishing.com.*