

# GROWERTALKS

JZ on D.C.

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## Grow Influence Where It Matters: Invite Your Member of Congress for a Visit

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**Editor's note:** As a preview leading up to AmericanHort's Impact Washington legislative fly-in event in September, Matt Mika, VP of Advocacy & Government Affairs, provides some tips on how to talk to your policymakers.—JZ

### Grow Influence Where It Matters: Invite Your Member of Congress for a Visit

Most elected officials have limited knowledge of the horticulture industry—what we grow, how we operate and the challenges we face. That's why building relationships with your members of Congress is critical—not just for your business, but for the future of our entire industry. Policy decisions affect labor, transportation, water use, taxes and more every day. If we don't help educate lawmakers, someone else will.

One of the most powerful ways to advocate is by inviting your member of Congress to tour your nursery, greenhouse, garden center or landscape operation. A site visit brings your business to life and helps elected officials understand how policy translates to real-world impact. These visits allow lawmakers to see the jobs you create, the communities you support and the contributions you make to the economy and environment.

Hosting a visit builds trust and opens the door to future conversations. It turns your operation into a story they remember—and return to—when making decisions.

Another powerful way to engage is to attend the Impact Washington Fly-In Summit, September 15–17, 2025 in Washington, D.C. AmericanHort hosts this event to give you direct access to lawmakers and agency leaders on Capitol Hill. It's a great first step in establishing those essential connections, which can be further strengthened by hosting a Congressional visit at your place of business.

### The 8 Steps to Ensure a Successful Congressional Visit

1. Work with AmericanHort and your state trade association: Contact both organizations to inform them of your desire to invite your member of 2. Congress to tour your business and seek assistance in coordinating.

Schedule a planning call: Either you or AmericanHort should coordinate a meeting with you and your state association to:

- Identify which members of Congress you want to invite

- Clarify the key policy issues you'd like to highlight, both from your perspective and the member's
- Select a date that aligns with the Congressional calendar based on when Congress is in recess

3. Extend an invitation: Decide whether you wish to extend an invitation, or if you want AmericanHort to contact the appropriate Congressional office(s) with an official invitation. Important details to include in the invitation are:

- Your operation's name, type and ownership
- What you grow and the scale of your business
- Number of employees (full time, part time, seasonal)
- Any policy concerns you wish to discuss
- Preferred timing and availability for a visit

4. Confirm the date and details: Once you hear back from your representative, finalize the date and time, confirm who's attending, and send calendar invitations so it's on all participants' schedules.

5. Fine-tune the logistics: Two weeks before the visit, touch base again to finalize all of the details, including:

- How many guests are expected
- Tour format (walking tour, golf cart, etc.)
- Any lunch or hospitality plans
- The specific policy topics to emphasize

6. Final preparation meeting: In the week leading up to the visit, hold a prep call with AmericanHort and your state association to:

- Review logistical details
- Go over talking points and key issues
- Answer any last-minute questions
- Provide background on the visiting officials and their staff members, if needed

7. On the day of the visit: Enjoy the experience! Focus on having a meaningful conversation, showing off your operation and capturing the moment with photos. This is your time to shine and share your story.

8. Post-visit follow-up: Within a day or two, send a thank you note to your member of Congress and their staff members who came to visit you. If there's any follow-up information you need to provide, this is an ideal time to provide that information.

Debrief with AmericanHort and your state association. This can be done via a short meeting or email and will cover visit highlights, next steps and any needed follow-up actions.

### **Start the conversation that shapes legislation**

Together, we can ensure that horticulture is seen, heard and supported. Let's help lawmakers connect the dots—between policy and people, between legislation and livelihood. At AmericanHort, we're here to support you every step of the way, ensuring your congressional visit is a success—from initial planning to follow-up. Contact the AmericanHort advocacy team to get started. Email me at [MattM@AmericanHort.org](mailto:MattM@AmericanHort.org).

—Matt Mika, AmericanHort

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## Department of Labor Suspends Enforcement of Farmworker Protection Rule

In June, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) announced it's suspending enforcement of the 2024 Farmworker Protection Rule. This nationwide injunction follows inconsistent judicial rulings, including litigation initiated by AmericanHort.

What does this mean?

DOL will not enforce the 2024 Farmworker Protection Rule while it considers future regulatory actions; only the enforcement of the rule is suspended, not the rule itself. Developed under the Biden Administration, the rule exceeded the original scope of the H-2A program, causing confusion and operational difficulties for America's growers. AmericanHort and co-plaintiffs still have a pending suit against DOL to stop the implementation of the 2024 H-2A Farmworker Protection Rule.

The current decision is a positive development and an important recognition of the regulatory burden the rule would have imposed. However, it doesn't change or eliminate any existing H-2A program regulations.

AmericanHort, its members and coalition partners worked diligently to communicate the rule's complexity, duplication and the unfair impact it would have had on growers. We'll continue closely monitoring DOL activity and advocate for regulatory clarity and fairness in agricultural labor policy.

—Matt Mika, AmericanHort

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## House Committee Advances Bipartisan Amendment to Ease H-2A and H-2B Visa Restrictions

The House Appropriations Committee adopted a bipartisan amendment to the FY 2026 Homeland Security Appropriations bill that includes key H-2A and H-2B visa reforms. Offered by Rep. Andy Harris (R-MD-01), the amendment would create an H-2B cap exemption for Certified Seasonal Employers, clarify H-2A program definitions and block implementation of the Biden Administration's H-2 modernization rule.

The amendment received broad bipartisan support during debate, though the full appropriations bill is expected to pass along party lines. Lawmakers were urged to advocate for the amendment with the Judiciary and Rules Committees, as similar H-2B relief was stripped out last year. AmericanHort and allies lobbied hard on behalf of Rep. Harris's amendment to be included in the bill.

—Rachel Pick, AmericanHort

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## Industry Professionals Meet to Tackle Key Plant Health Issues

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service-Plant Protection and Quarantine (APHIS-PPQ) senior

leadership hosted its annual “Nursery Sector” meeting in June. The meeting, now in its 10th year, provides a chance for important dialogue on plant health, import and export, and quarantine issues central to the viability of the plant supply chain.

This year, AmericanHort invited Arianna Cabrera de Oña, Chief People Officer and General Counsel of Costa Farms, and Greg Elwell, General Manager of Iseli Nursery, to attend this meeting in person. Attending virtually were Ball Horticultural Company (Mike Klopmeier, Shannon Carmody and Cheni Filios), Saunders Brothers (Bennett Saunders), Brite Leaf Citrus Nursery (Nate Jameson) and the Northwest Nursery Improvement Institute (Bill Howell and Mike Willett).

AmericanHort and participating industry members discussed several key issues, including the need for a more practical and transparent approach to offshore testing under the revised Ralstonia program, improvements in Plant Inspection Station consistency and communication, and a more coordinated response to new pest detections like *Phytophthora austrocedri*. APHIS also noted a 10% staff reduction at inspection stations over the past year, though hiring is underway.

This meeting provides a critical opportunity for the nursery industry to influence agency direction and promote science-based, risk-proportionate regulatory practices that protect plant health while supporting the continued movement of nursery stock.

—*Kamron Newberry, AmericanHort*

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