

GROWERTALKS

JZ on D.C.

9/30/2025

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Jennifer Zurko

DOL Pauses H-2A Fees Amid Shift to E-Payments

The Department of Labor announced a temporary suspension of H-2A labor certification fee collections, effective 30 days after the notice's publication in the Federal Register. This pause will allow the Office of Foreign Labor Certification (OFLC) to transition from paper-based payments to electronic fee processing, in line with Executive Order 14247 on modernizing federal payment systems. During the suspension, no new invoices will be issued for certified applications and fees will not be retroactively collected.

Read the announcement [HERE](#).

—Matt Mika, *AmericanHort*

State Department Narrows Visa Interview Waiver Eligibility

As of September 2, the U.S. Department of State will significantly limit eligibility for nonimmigrant visa interview waivers. Most applicants, including minors and seniors, will now require in-person interviews unless they're renewing an H-1B or H-2B visa or are in certain diplomatic categories under specific conditions. This marks a departure from the more flexible waiver policy that's been in place since February.

To read the announcement, [GO HERE](#).

—Matt Mika, *AmericanHort*

USDA Reorganization Plan Draws Scrutiny from House Agriculture Democrats

House Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Angie Craig (MN-02) and other Democrats on the committee sent a letter to USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins in August expressing concerns about the Department's recently announced reorganization.

The lawmakers noted that the plan was developed without input from Congress or stakeholders and drew comparisons to prior reorganization efforts. They cautioned that the changes could affect USDA's ability to serve farmers and rural communities effectively. The letter also referenced past GAO findings and emphasized the importance of considering lessons learned from previous efforts.

Read the letter [HERE](#).

—Rachel Pick, *AmericanHort*

AmericanHort Engages With Regulators at the National Plant Board Annual Meeting

The AmericanHort Advocacy & Government Affairs team presented and engaged with national plant health leaders at the 99th Annual Meeting of the National Plant Board in late July. The Plant Board represents state plant regulatory officials responsible for licensing, inspecting and certifying nurseries, as well as managing plant health and quarantine programs. Our federal partners at the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection were also in attendance.

This annual meeting is a strategic advocacy opportunity for AmericanHort to build key relationships with regulators and address issues that could disrupt the national and regional horticultural marketplace.

During the meeting, I delivered formal remarks sharing the industry's perspective on critical plant health issues. I also highlighted the impact of emerging pests, evolving regulations and diagnostic challenges on nursery and greenhouse operations, and underscored the need for science-based decision-making, transparent communication and collaborative solutions.

AmericanHort continues to engage at this event to help ensure the horticulture industry has a seat at the table as national plant health policies are developed and implemented.

—*Kamron Newberry, AmericanHort*

EPA Issues New Guidance to Prevent Diesel Engine Shutdowns

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin announced new guidance calling on diesel engine and equipment manufacturers to update software in existing vehicles to prevent sudden power loss when diesel exhaust fluid (DEF) runs out or when sensors fail.

Under current systems, a DEF-related fault can quickly trigger a “derate” that slows a vehicle to as little as 5 miles per hour, often within hours, to comply with Tier 4 emissions standards. While intended to protect air quality, these abrupt slowdowns have caused costly delays for farmers, truckers and construction operators, sometimes stopping equipment in the middle of critical work.

The new guidance, developed in collaboration with manufacturers, ensures that updates can be applied to the existing fleet without additional bureaucratic approvals, giving operators more time to address problems without sacrificing productivity or environmental compliance.

The change is expected to save family farms an estimated \$727 million annually and follows an EPA rule requiring all new diesel trucks starting in model year 2027 to be built to avoid sudden shutdowns from DEF issues.

Read the whole announcement [HERE](#).

—*Kamron Newberry, AmericanHort*

EPA Launches PALM App to Streamline Pesticide Mitigation

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has launched the Pesticide App for Label Mitigations (PALM), a mobile-friendly tool that helps farmers and applicators quickly access recommended measures to reduce pesticide exposure to nontarget species.

PALM combines EPA's spray drift and runoff calculators into one streamlined interface, drawing from the latest

Ecological Mitigation Support Document, Insecticide Strategy and Herbicide Strategy. By making mitigation options easily accessible in the field, PALM supports EPA's efforts to improve compliance, sustainability and efficiency, with future updates planned to expand its features.

Get the app [HERE](#).

—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.*