

GROWERTALKS

JZ on D.C.

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Inflation Rises to 3%, Deepening Economic Strain Amid Ongoing Shutdown

Annual inflation rose to 3% in September, its highest level since January, driven largely by higher gasoline and energy prices. The Consumer Price Index increased 0.3% for the month, according to delayed Bureau of Labor Statistics data released following the federal shutdown. Food and energy costs led the surge—beef prices climbed nearly 15%, electricity rose 5.1% and piped gas 11.7%. Economists pointed to the lingering impact of tariffs as a key driver, while slowing job growth and rising unemployment deepened economic unease. As of press time, public approval of President Trump's handling of the economy has fallen to 38%, marking a new low since early 2017.

—*Rachel Pick, AmericanHort*

Social Security Benefits Rise to 2.8% in 2026

Beginning in January, Social Security recipients will see a 2.8% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), an average increase of \$56 per month for roughly 75 million beneficiaries, according to the Social Security Administration (SSA). The 2026 adjustment slightly exceeds last year's 2.5% hike, keeping pace with recent inflation trends.

The announcement followed September inflation data showing the fastest price growth since January, which helped determine the new COLA rate. The SSA will also raise the maximum taxable earnings subject to Social Security from \$176,100 to \$184,500. Beneficiaries should receive notification of their updated benefits by mail in early December.

—*Rachel Pick, AmericanHort*



From left to right: Jordan Rolfe, Rep. Gabe Evans and Brandon Olson.

Congressman Visits Olson's Greenhouse of Colorado

Jordan Rolfe and Brandon Olson of Olson's Greenhouse Gardens hosted Rep. Gabe Evans (R-CO-08) at their Fort Lupton, Colorado, greenhouse on Friday, October 10. Rolfe is the current chair of the AmericanHort Advocacy Committee.

If you would like to host your Member of Congress at your facility, please contact the AmericanHort Advocacy and Government Affairs team.

DOL Interim Final Rule on Agricultural Wages

The Department of Labor (DOL) suspended enforcement of its 2024 rule aimed at expanding H-2A guest worker protections and proposed rescinding it entirely. Concurrently, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has

introduced a new rule that was effective October 2, 2025 to streamline the H-2A filing process.

In addition to the rule-making referenced above on October 2, DOL published a long-awaited interim final rule (IFR) revising the wage methodology for determining the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR). This rule was issued quickly in response to recent litigation that vacated the 2023 wage rule and the USDA's termination of the Farm Labor Survey, which had previously determined AEWR rates. The new methodology now relies on the Occupational Employment Wage Statistics survey, a three-year running average updated annually in July and a state's minimum wage.

You can download a PDF of the rule [HERE](#) and a breakdown of the new rates provided by JPH Law [HERE](#).

— **Matt Mika, AmericanHort; and Lynn Jacquez and Shawn Packer, JPH Law**

Pesticide Policy Coalition Endorses Douglas Troutman for EPA Leadership Role

The Pesticide Policy Coalition (PPC), of which AmericanHort is an active member, sent a letter of support for the nomination of Douglas M. Troutman as Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Chemical Safety & Pollution Prevention (OCSPP).

The PPC highlighted Troutman's extensive leadership experience and deep understanding of key environmental statutes, including the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide & Rodenticide Act, and the Toxic Substances Control Act. His background in managing chemical safety and regulatory compliance makes him well qualified to lead OCSPP in advancing policies that protect public health and the environment while ensuring access to critical pest management tools. The coalition urged the U.S. Senate to move swiftly in confirming his nomination.

—**Rachel Pick, AmericanHort**

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