GROWERTALKS

JZ on D.C.

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Status of the new Farm Bill (as of press time)

Jennifer Zurko

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Days before writing this, the House Agriculture Committee passed the Farm, Food & National Security Act of 2026 (H.R. 7567) on March 5 with a 34-17 bipartisan vote, advancing it to the full House. The bill aims to update commodity programs, crop insurance and conservation, following a one-year extension of the 2018 legislation that expires September 30, 2026.

Key issues included in the 2026 proposal focus on strengthening safety nets for farmers facing low income and high costs, along with adjustments to nutrition and conservation programs.

As for specialty crops, the new Farm Bill proposes the creation of a Specialty Crop Advisory Committee for USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) to address unique policy needs, a program called the FRIDGE Act to improve cold-chain infrastructure for perishable products and expanding coverage for specific crops under the RMA. There are also provisions for expanded access to capital, investment in automation and pesticide regulatory reform. AmericanHort has the specifics broken down on their website. Visit https://americanhort.org/advocacy/action/2026-house-farm-bill-markup-what-it-means-for-greenhouse-nursery-growers/

Now, the bill faces further negotiations regarding its funding and scope before potentially reaching a full floor vote in the House. AmericanHort is watching the developments closely and will be sending out updates as new information becomes available.

AmericanHort Joins Amicus Brief to Defend H-2A Wage Reform and Protect Growers' Labor Stability
AmericanHort joined more than 25 agricultural organizations in filing an amicus brief defending the Department of Labor's (DOL) updated H-2A wage rule. The coalition maintains that reform is essential to shielding growers from unsustainable labor cost spikes and providing the stability businesses need. The lawsuit challenging the updated DOL rule is expected to inject damaging uncertainty into an already strained labor system that's essential to the operation of horticulture businesses.
—Matt Mike & Rachel Pick, AmericanHort

DHS Announces Supplemental H-2B Visa Release
The Department of Homeland Security will issue 64,716 additional H-2B visas this year under a supplemental rule,

with most reserved for returning workers. The visas will be released in three rounds: 18,490 for early-season needs (January 1–March 31), 27,736 for April hiring, and 18,490 for late-season demand (May 1–September 30), with the final round open regardless of returning worker status. The rule doesn't include a special allocation for Northern Central America. For horticulture employers that rely on seasonal labor, the added visas could help ease workforce shortages during peak production periods.

—Rachel Pick, AmericanHort

Congressional Exit Trend Grows as Midterm Pressure Mounts

Congressional retirements have climbed to their highest level in nearly a decade. Fifty-one House members—including 30 Republicans—and nine senators have announced they won't seek re-election, signaling frustration with gridlock, polarization and the personal toll of constant campaigning. Political strategists say the unusually high number of departures could foreshadow a difficult midterm cycle. Historical trends indicate that midterm elections typically result in the president's party losing seats and a shift in congressional control. **GT**

—Rachel Pick, AmericanHort

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