GROWERTALKS

JZ on D.C.

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Tell Your Representatives to Support the Farm Bill

Jennifer Zurko

As reported in last month's JZ on D.C., the House Agriculture Committee advanced the Farm, Food & National Security Act of 2026 (also known as the Farm Bill) with bipartisan support.

The policies in the 2018 Farm Bill no longer reflect today's agricultural challenges. Greenhouse and nursery businesses, along with the broader horticulture sector and other specialty crop producers, need updated risk management tools, stronger research investments and modern plant health programs.

The House Farm Bill strengthens specialty crop research, improves plant pest and disease programs, reauthorizes the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, enhances disaster assistance for tree and nursery growers, and supports innovation and automation to help address workforce challenges and keep our industry competitive.

Ornamental horticulture supports nearly 3 million American jobs and contributes $520 billion to the U.S. economy. A strong, updated Farm Bill is essential to sustaining that impact.

With committee approval secured, the next step is consideration on the House floor. AmericanHort is asking that you contact your House Representative to urge them to support bringing the 2026 Farm Bill to the House floor for a vote by going to americanhort.org/advocacy/voter-voice. You can also sign up to get alerts on this page when opportunities to share your voice are announced.

—JZ; Source: Matt Mika & Mary Beth Cowardin, AmericanHort

Senate Confirms Mullins to Lead Department of Homeland Security

In March, the U.S. Senate confirmed former Senator Markwayne Mullin (R-OK) as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). He takes the helm of one of the federal government's largest agencies at a time of continued focus on immigration enforcement and border security. His confirmation followed scrutiny from some lawmakers over leadership style and past statements, but he ultimately secured enough support to advance.

Secretary Mullin brings a record of engagement on agricultural labor and workforce issues from his time in

Congress. During his confirmation process, he signaled a commitment to maintaining enforcement priorities while improving coordination, oversight and operational consistency across DHS.

AmericanHort will continue working with DHS leadership and policymakers to advocate for reliable, timely access to H-2A and H-2B labor, and ensure the workforce needs of horticulture businesses are represented in ongoing ag labor discussions.

— Frida Mendez, DCLRS, & Rachel Pick, AmericanHort

H-2B Cap Reached for Second Half of FY 2026

U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) received enough petitions to meet the H-2B cap for the second half of FY 2026, reflecting continued demand for seasonal labor across industries like horticulture and landscaping. March 10, 2026, marked the final receipt date for cap-subject petitions requesting start dates between April 1 and October 1. Petitions received after this date for that window will be rejected.

This follows the cap being reached for the first half of the fiscal year, meaning all 66,000 congressionally authorized H-2B visas have now been allocated. USCIS has also released filing timelines for upcoming supplemental visa allocations, which may offer limited relief for employers. With demand continuing to exceed supply, this underscores ongoing workforce challenges for seasonal businesses and the importance of timely filing and additional visa availability.

In other H-2B news, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) is proposing to extend the primary H-2B application (ETA-9142B) and its appendices without changes, preserving the current process employers rely on to access seasonal labor.

DOL also proposes to eliminate Form ETA-9155, an unused H-2B registration form that was never implemented following litigation in California. In practice, the Department moved to an internal registration system, making the standalone form unnecessary.

This proposal maintains stability for H-2B employers and avoids introducing new administrative burdens. For horticulture businesses that depend on timely access to seasonal labor, predictability in the application process remains critical.

— Frida Mendez, DCLRS, & Rachel Pick, AmericanHort

Early Primaries Begin to Shape 2026 Midterm Landscape

Primary elections held between late February and early March are beginning to clarify the political landscape ahead of the 2026 midterm elections. Several states—including Texas, North Carolina and Mississippi—held early contests that will help shape the field of candidates heading into November.

In Texas, the Republican primary for U.S. Senate heads to a May runoff between incumbent Sen. John Cornyn and Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton after neither candidate secured a majority. In North Carolina, Democrat Roy Cooper will face Republican Michael Whatley for an open U.S. Senate seat (left vacant by Sen. Thom Tillis), setting up a closely watched general election race later this year. In Mississippi, incumbent Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith easily secured the Republican nomination and will face Democratic challenger Scott Colom and independent Ty Pinkins in the general election.

Several House contests also drew attention. In Texas's 2nd Congressional District, state Rep. Steve Toth defeated incumbent Rep. Dan Crenshaw in the Republican primary. All four incumbent Mississippi House members also advanced, including longtime Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-MS-02), who won his Democratic primary and will seek reelection in November.

Additional primaries in Arkansas, along with recent contests in Mississippi and a special election in Georgia, have further begun to define the candidate field for November as the 2026 election cycle accelerates.

—Rachel Pick, AmericanHort

AmericanHort Secures Practical Path Forward for Rose Imports

Earlier this year, AmericanHort learned that USDA's Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) was considering changes that could have significantly restricted, or effectively halted, the import of new rose varieties from global suppliers.

AmericanHort met directly with APHIS leadership in late March and shared feedback from across the industry, outlining the potential business impacts and offering a practical path forward that would protect plant health without disrupting trade.

Following those discussions, APHIS changed course and is now advancing an approach that preserves access to new rose genetics while addressing plant health concerns. This outcome provides critical certainty for growers and breeders, avoids supply chain disruption, and ensures continued innovation in the marketplace.

This is a strong example of how coordinated industry engagement and constructive dialogue with regulators can produce workable solutions.

For more information, including a technical breakdown, GO HERE. **GT**

—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.