

Stay Engaged In Defending Your Green Industry Livelihood



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Do you want to be a voice in influencing legislation and shaping regulations that affect your landscape or lawn service business? You can't do it with a one-and-done approach. Boost your chances to affect change by maintaining contact with your lawmakers or their aides beyond the single letter, email or phone call.

Certainly, there are enough issues to share your feelings and experiences about, but focus only on those that directly impact your business and the green industry, in general.

This past July 18, a group of about 85 landscape and lawn care business owners and their supporters (from across the United States and at their own expense) participated in the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) [Legislative Day on the Hill](#) in Washington, D.C.

The afternoon prior to heading to Capitol Hill, NALP Vice President of Government Relations Paul Mendelsohn led a panel discussion with Brandon Sheppard of Weed Man, Josh Denison of Denison Landscaping and Nursery and Joseph Barnes of Yellowstone Landscape. This panel lauded the group for participating in the event but stressed that relying on this single visit to affect meaningful change was unrealistic.

Follow up. Follow up. Follow up.

Follow up, follow up, follow up and establish relationships with lawmakers and their legislative aides, they stressed.

"Tell your story. Know your facts and know the people you will be speaking to," said Denison. "You are the subject matter experts." He urged business owners "to get to the point" in defining what the issues mean to their businesses. "We get to define who we are. We are good stewards of the

environment in our communities.”

Sheppard urged NALP participants to follow up with a letter and maintain contact with the people they meet during their Capitol Hill visits. “Invite them to visit your facility and see the work that you do, the impact of what you do.” This includes what your company means to not only the market it serves but also to your employees, their voting constituents. Do not assume that lawmakers know very much about the green industry and its sizable impact on the nation’s economy, not to mention the millions of people it employs.

“View your Hill meeting as step number one in building your relationships,” added Joseph Barnes who related how he had made it a point to introduce himself to a House member in his district and share important facts about the industry.



Photo: Nobile Photography, NALP

This year’s big issues

This year, participants in the Legislative Days on the Hill event sought their legislators’ help on:

- **H-2B cap relief in the Department of Homeland Security appropriations legislation or other appropriate legislation for fiscal year 2018.** Industry also seeks passage of permanent H-2B reform along the lines of the Save Our Small and Seasonal Businesses Act (S 792) and the Strengthen Employment and Seasonal Opportunities Now Act (HR 2004). *Read more: [Industry Needs Permanent Fixes to H-2B Visa Program](#)*
- **Primacy of FIFRA in pesticide regulation.** The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act is the law of the land when it comes to the pesticide registration process – a process that fully accounts for impacts to endangered species and their habitat. Nevertheless, the use of beneficial EPA-approved products is threatened due to burdensome administrative requirements under the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act.
- **Pesticide registration funding.** NALP and its members urge the Senate to quickly pass the Pesticide Registration Enhancement Act (HR 1029), which was passed by the House on March 20, 2017. The bill would allow new and innovative pest control solutions to be quickly brought to the market. The bill also provides funding for important pesticide applicator training activities. Industry seeks a minimum of \$128 million for the EPA’s Office of Pesticide Programs to allow the pesticide registration program to continue to operate.

How can you make your opinion known on any of these issues? Write or email your elected official (senator or representatives), and let them know how one of several of these issues are negatively affecting your business. Better yet, seek to meet with them in person, although in most cases you will be meeting with one of their legislative aides.

Regardless of how you reach out to them, follow up. In the case of a personal

meeting (the annual August recess often finds legislators back among their constituencies), always follow up with a thank you note and include a short reminder of what you shared with them.

Then – and this is very important – stay in contact with your lawmakers and their influencers, their legislative aides. Follow the example of the [H-2B Workforce Coalition](#), which maintains a constant presence with lawmakers in seeking fixes to the nonimmigrant seasonal visa program. The coalition represents thousands of seasonal businesses that depend on nonimmigrant seasonal labor to grow and, in some cases, even survive.