

CNLA Update



Connecticut
Nursery &
Landscape
Association

CNLA Update - May 15, 2014

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Legislature Careens to Chaotic Close



The 2014 session careened to a chaotic close Wednesday, May 7th at midnight with over 100 bills passing in the final hours. This has been an intense session for CNLA with numerous issues plaguing the industry. We tackled everything from Ag Unionization early on to a ban on GMO grass seed to many business and budgetary issues. We had a number of successes and achievements this session, and the following is a quick summary of actions taken. You can read our more detailed report in the upcoming May issue of the CNLA Magazine. Again, our lobbying team, Linda Kowalski and The Kowalski Group, sends special thanks to CNLA members who took action this session and contacted their state legislators about bills of importance. Your voices truly do count up in Hartford!

Major Win-Ag Unionization Legislation Did Not Advance

The threat of agriculture unionization presented itself early, in H.B. 5066, a bill that included a proposal to remove the current exemption for Ag workers. Fortunately, CNLA mobilized. We talked repeatedly to key members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee about the potential harm of the proposal to Connecticut-based agriculture. Early on, CNLA had a very good meeting with Sen. Cathy Osten,

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who was serving as Senate Co-chair of the Labor Committee at the start of the session, on the issue and expressed our concerns about the provision. Ultimately, the legislation did not move forward out of committee.

Pesticides Bills Die After High Stakes Battle Over GMO Grass Seed Ban

We also met with success over a high-stakes battle to ban genetically engineered lawn and turf seeds. The bill in question, S.B. 443, would prohibit any such seeds from being produced, distributed or used in Connecticut. CNLA's position upon the introduction of this controversial measure was simple, clear and direct: Look to the science. Unfortunately, there was very little science-based evidence produced on the issue, and the bill was never vetted properly with a public hearing. Environment Committee members also voiced concerns that the bill did not have a public hearing. The proposal was overwhelmingly defeated in the House by a vote of 37 in favor and 103 opposed with 9 absent and not voting. Proponents of the measure have already announced it will be one of their top priorities next session.

Bond Package Includes Funding for Ag Experiment Station Upgrades

The House passed S.B. 29, An Act Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the State For Capital Improvements, Transportation and Other Purposes, As Amended by Senate Amendments A and B, in concurrence with the Senate. Included in SB 29 is \$1,000,000 for the Agricultural Experiment Station for planning, design, construction, and equipment for additions and renovations to the Valley Laboratory in Windsor. The bill now goes to the Governor for his signature.

Minimum Wage Raised

One issue that was settled for the time being is that of the minimum wage. Under legislation sponsored by Governor Malloy, the minimum wage will increase in several steps to \$10.10/hour by January 1, 2017. The



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legislation, S.B. 32, is now Public Act 14-1, and was signed by the Governor on March 27.

Liability for Running Bamboo Passes In Response to Property Owners Call For Action

If you plant Running Bamboo, beware. One of the last bills to pass before adjournment, S.B. 72, prohibits anyone from planting the bamboo within 40 feet of an adjoining property. Furthermore, any bamboo now in the ground that is less than that setback could trigger a \$100 fine if it spreads to the neighboring property. The Environment Committee promoted the bill as a result of complaints on the proliferation of the plant.



Landscape Licensure Bill

CNLA offered a solid proposal to create a Landscape Contractor License, S.B. 238, and CNLA testified in the Environment Committee. Agency officials and other parties suggested the state could not afford the cost of the new license, and that they did not have the staff needed to oversee the testing and licensure process. We responded that there should be no cost to the state as any costs would more than be covered by the fees paid by applicants. This is a bill whose time has come, and we will look to reintroduce it next session.

Save the Date:

CNLA SUMMER FIELD DAY IS JULY 16th

Jason Scire is the Chair of this year's event to be held at VanWilgen's Garden Center in North Branford. More information to follow.

State Budget Increases Per Student Grant and Tuition for Regional Ag Science Centers

The state's budget increases the per student state grant

for the regional agricultural science and technology centers. Per student grants are increased from \$2,750 to \$3,200. Meanwhile, the maximum tuition that can be charged for students will decrease-from \$7,199.67 to \$6,822.80. The budget implementer bill E-Cert., H.B. 5597, Sections 118 & 119, increases Per-Student Grant and Tuition For Regional Ag-Science Centers. Section 137 is a sweeping study of Connecticut's tax system.

Let's give a Shout Out to . . .

Van Wilgen's Garden Center in North Branford for installing an on-site charger for electric vehicles. Van Wilgen's received a nice write-up on this in The New Haven Register, with Ryan Van Wilgen saying "In the green industry it's easy to be green". The charging station is offered to the public at no charge.

Congratulations to Jason and Jess Scire!

Congratulations to the Scire family! Jason and Jess Scire are the proud parents of a new baby daughter, Emma! Emma arrived on May 15th. The proud parents and baby are all doing well.

Summer Courses in Horticulture: NVCC

Summer courses are being offered at Naugatuck Valley Community College. Classes start on June 2, 2014. To register online go to : www.nv.edu/admissions

Contact: Christopher Tuccio for more information:
(203) 596-8634





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