Northern California News and Events

Department of Labor Regulation Threatens Family Farms

I joined over 150 other representatives in expressing opposition to the Department of Labor's pending rule to limit youth under 16 from working in agriculture. Because of the potential for subjective interpretations, the rule could prohibit youth from working on a family farm or ranch unless it is run and owned solely by their parents. For example, it could be interpreted as forbidding adolescents from working on a farm that is partially owned by other relatives—even if their parents have partial ownership. In doing so, the rule could make it significantly more difficult for the next generation of farmers and ranchers to get valuable work experience, such as operating machinery and handling livestock, during their youth. Since many family farms and ranches fall under these situations, it could harm the livelihoods of many in Northern California and across our nation. For these reasons, I strongly oppose this regulation and will continue to do all I can to prevent it from taking effect in its current form.

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Right Now

Federal Labor Board Drops Suit Against Boeing

I wanted to follow up on my earlier e-update on the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) lawsuit aimed at blocking Boeing's plan to open a new aircraft assembly facility in South Carolina. The NLRB recently closed its case and will not pursue shutting down the plant. In the end, the disputes between Boeing leadership and workers were resolved in their labor negotiations, and the NLRB's quick dropping of its lawsuit after the new labor agreement suggests that the threats about closing one of Boeing's plants were nothing more than a political stunt to give the labor union additional leverage during negotiations with Boeing management. While I believe the NLRB's decision to withdraw its lawsuit was a positive development, I remain concerned that the agency has the authority to use questionable motives to openly attack job creators. I will continue supporting H.R. 2587 to prevent the NLRB from forcing a business to relocate jobs or to halt production at a particular facility. During this difficult economic time, we should be doing everything possible to create an environment that allows American businesses – our job creators – to invest, grow and hire Americans.

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Justice Department's Alarming Prosecution of Border Patrol Agent

As you may know, Border Patrol Agent Jesus Diaz was recently given a two-year prison sentence for using unreasonable force during an arrest of a drug smuggler. I certainly do not condone the use of excessive force, but the facts of this case raise serious questions about the Justice Department's decision to prosecute Agent Diaz. It is my understanding that the smuggler in question was given immunity in exchange for his testimony against Agent Diaz even though it was contradicted by photographic evidence and by testimonies from other agents at the scene. Additionally, Agent Diaz was cleared of all wrongdoing in this matter by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of the Inspector General and the U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement's Office of Professional Wrongdoing.

I am alarmed by the Department of Justice's disregard of these internal investigations and am concerned that the prosecution of Agent Diaz could have a chilling effect on the law enforcement officers tasked with the dangerous mission of protecting our nation's borders. For these reasons, I recently joined 36 other members of Congress in asking President Obama to address several concerns regarding the prosecution of Agent Diaz and its potentially negative impact on the performance of the Border Patrol. We also requested the President to indicate whether he believes the two-year prison sentence was justified. You can view the full text of the letter here .

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Recent Past

Reining in Costly Government Regulation

Small business owners in Northern California often tell me that government regulation is

interfering with their work, forcing them to raise prices and hire fewer workers. The Small Business Administration reported that the annual cost of regulations in 2008 was $1.75 trillion. For a small business, the regulatory burden costs $10,585 per employee annually. Furthermore, the current dynamic allows elected officials, who are accountable to the public, to blame unelected bureaucrats when problems arise. In order to rein in these excessive regulations, I believe Congress should require federal agencies to perform a comprehensive review of the economic costs of proposed rules and have the final say whether rules with major costs go into effect.

The House of Representatives recently passed two significant bills to restore proper limits on regulation. H.R. 527 , the Regulatory Flexibility Improvements Act of 2011, would limit the costs of regulation by requiring that agencies consider indirect impacts in their economic analysis, just as they already do in their environmental analysis. In addition, it closes loopholes that have allowed some agencies to avoid weighing the costs and benefits of multiple alternatives when writing regulations. H.R. 10 , the Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny (REINS) Act, requires Congress to approve any new major rule proposed by the Executive Branch before it can go into effect. A “major rule” is any rule that would result in an annual effect on the economy of $100 million or more, a major increase in costs or prices for consumers, or significant adverse effects on the economy. While such rules are relatively few in number, they can have a devastating impact on small businesses, such as the new regulations on CAFE (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) standards that could cost as much as $141 billion. Additionally, the legislation requires that Congress act within 70 legislative days to prevent unnecessary delays.
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