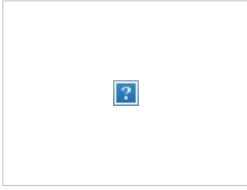


ASTOUNDINGLY, DEPT. OF LABOR STEPS BACK FROM YOUTH SAFETY IN FARM WORK



Leaving safety advocates speechless, the Department of Labor, on Thursday night, withdrew a regulatory proposal for increasing safety of youth in farm work. Rep. Bob Goodlatte, R-6th said, "After months of speaking out against this rule that would harm the rural way of life, I am pleased that the Department of Labor has made the decision to withdraw it." The arguments against the proposal were that it would affect the farming way of life and prevent youth below 16 from working in farms. So, why was the regulation proposed in the first place? According to a statement of the Department of Labor announcing the proposal that had been made in February, the regulation was made necessary "by studies showing that children are significantly more likely to be killed while performing agriculture work than while performing work in all other industries combined." In the most recent available data, only in 2009, there were 6,912 injuries to minors between 10 and 15 years of age from farm-related work according to the National Agriculture Statistics Service. Apparently, the tough economy and the prospect of blocking minors from working in grain silos, feedlots and stockyards was not acceptable to farmers and family farms. A standing law called the parental exemption law would have exempted youth working for family farms from the ambit of the regulation. So, the only effect that withdrawing the regulation has is not of preventing youths from working in their own family farms, but of allowing farmers to continue hiring children and minors for their work. And this is allowed by the administration in spite of evidence on its hands that such work is hazardous to the youth and children.

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