

Congressmen works for labor law changes

Breaking federal law for allowing your child to work on the family farm? If the Department of Labor's latest proposal takes effect, that will be the outcome.

Being fined nearly six figures for allowing your teenage son to sell rabbits to the local pet store? A Missouri family learned about that existing U.S. Department of Agriculture regulation the hard way.

We could only hope these stories of proposed or actual overregulation were fiction. Unfortunately, they are as real as can be.

These stories would be laughable if the consequences were not so serious. Like other regulations that hold back the profitability of agriculture, "rules" like these—even rumored ones—have the intended or unintended consequence of hampering the continuity of the family farm.

When regulation is used to discourage or prevent young people from learning the science and art of agriculture, Washington threatens the existence and future of rural America.

When we heard that the Farm Bill was going to be taken up by the Super Committee, I introduced a bill to stop the overregulation that is killing the family farm. Under normal circumstances, it would have been ideal to consider this when the Agriculture Committee—on which I serve—took up the next Farm Bill. Entitled the "Freeing Agriculture



On the Potomac
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to Reap More" (FARM) Act, my bill would address about a dozen regulations that Kansans have told me are undermining and destroying the continuity and profitability of agriculture.

In addition to reversing the two previously mentioned regulations that affect future farmers and ranchers, the act also deals with regulations that hurt or may hurt those in business today. Among other things, the act will prevent regulation of farm dust, prohibit the redefinition of "navigable waters," prevent the Environmental Protection Agency from imposing taxes on livestock emissions, allow farmers to operate tractors without a commercial driver's license and block money for the White House Rural Council.

Ideally, this bill would serve as a "regulatory title" in the Farm Bill. Given the economic impact of regulation, it merits its own title amid others such as trade, research, conservation, or farm credit. When it looks like direct payments are go-

ing away, the least Congress can do is alleviate the crushing regulation that costs our farmers and ranchers money that they could otherwise use to create jobs.

Now that the budget Super Committee has (unsurprisingly) failed to come up with \$1.2 trillion of recommended cuts—as it was charged to do as a condition of the debt limit increase—the Agriculture Committee will be able to come up with its own Farm Bill. When the debate happens, I hope my colleagues will give due consideration to the FARM Act.

It may be an uphill battle, given that I am only one of about a dozen farmers in the House, but nevertheless I will push hard for a regulatory title like the act. No more families should fall victim to the "bureaucratic and regulatory wisdom" that Washington frequently and unnecessarily imposes on American agriculture.

Elfkins look into schools, find busy students, teachers

To the Editor:

The people of the City of Oberlin have a good, healthy work ethic here. We Elfs and Elfkins are trying to lovingly coach them, encouraging them to think revolutionary ideas and thoughts. This will inspire them to look confidentially up, rather than face down.

A vision is the image—the imagination, if you will—of an individual, organization or community. Visioning is the work of a "group," not just the folks with titles. Everyone in Oberlin needs to find their voice and respectfully speak to others about their questions, ideas and beliefs.

In return, we all need to be open enough to listen in return as well, to create a strong foundation of a trusting and safe environment for future generations, everyone willingly carrying their share of the burden of creating an attainable and realistic vision. Hopefully, they will wake up and dream new dreams for the present population and those who will come up or live in the Oberlin area in the future. It takes time, it takes endurance, it takes all of us with much patience.

Compassionate, merciful Brother Elf bowed his lovely head for a moment and softly spoke to us all. "I love everyone, especially the little ones. If they would turn to me, I would help them carry all of their heavy burdens, my yoke is easy, and my burdens light."

"Wise Father Elf has delivered all things to me. Even babes can understand what Father Elf has delivered unto me to do. We want everyone to enter their rest from heavy burdens."

We then pulled out elfkins reports, and we realized why we were drawn to go to the Oberlin Elementary School and high school.

First Good Deeds Report
We had heard how good the high school plays were, so we snuck in the back of the auditorium and sat still in our seats. Our elfkin hearts and minds were filled with wonder at the talent and genius of these young people acting skillfully the play, "The Music Man." We marveled at the professional singing

and acting done by everyone on the stage.

Second Good Deeds Report
Loving Mother Elf composed herself, wiped the tears from her all-seeing eyes and said, "It sounds as if Oberlin area has very good Christian traditional moral values, a standard of excellence and suitable training for their children, students, and growing people." We responded we had visited with the Principal Duane Dorshorst and he shared these things with us:

The Oberlin School District has two schools, Oberlin Elementary and Decatur Community Junior/Senior High, which houses students in grades 7 to 12.

The district prides itself on high academic standards and balanced educational opportunities. The high school curriculum includes art, instrumental and vocal music, industrial arts and drafting, technology and agriculture.

Athletic programs include football, volleyball, cross country, basketball, wrestling, track, golf and cheerleading.

We heard our players play fair, clean and with few penalties against them.

Other competitions are offered in Scholar Bowl, debate and forensics. Fine arts programs are a pride and joy. The high school also has a musical in the fall and all-school play in the spring. Forensic teams have finished in the top 10 at the state competition. The elementary school also presents vocal and instrumental concerts, as well as a sixth-grade musical in the second semester.

We Elfkins frequently walked the school halls and observed friendly, well behaved children. Parents and friends are actively involved with the kids and support activities at the schools.

Principal Dorshorst gave a list a page long of those who on the staff work to help the young ones to a better future ahead. There are many volunteers, he said, who help, listen to the smaller children and read to them, helpers in the kitchen, various volunteer jobs at athletic events all through the year. We asked, "how

many people altogether on your list?" "Ninety people and of counting," he said. Wow!

Third Good Deeds Report
The weather has really changed this past month. Beautiful white, glistening snow fell, leaving much on the ground. Elfkins from the heavenly workshop understand about chilly weather. This time of the year in Elf Land, we are so very busy in the workshops doing good deeds and filling needs, when the colder weather comes, we hardly notice!

We noticed a cafe on the red brick main Street that was brightly strung with Christmas lights and decorations. The sign outside said "Coffee, Tea, and Me." We walked in the front, then heard a woman voice in the back say to us, "Come in and have something warm to eat and drink."

We sat down at the round tables and just relaxed and visited. We had a delightful bowl of potato soup and chocolate drink as we talked to each other. Barb, our new friend, told about a get-together she planned for food, fellowship, and fun here, "Where friends meet." She called it the "Oberlin Turnaround." We asked more about it, and she said it would be a Christmas Party for everyone around town and the area to enjoy the evening together, with music, Christmas caroling sing-along.

Every Elf and Elfkin agreed, "Oberlin Turnaround sounds so wonderful!"

Elfkins Mini Updates
• Remember to bring food items to Stanley Hardware for the food bank to help others who may be in need.

• Please pray for the parents of Karen Larson Zane. Her father had a stroke and fell and hurt his head. Gladly, Karen mother is near his side.

• Remember to keep smiling, singing, loving, talking, and listening. Merry Christmas!!

We at Elf Land want you to know, we love you all!

The Elfkins

Santa gets last-minute requests

We had an urgent late mail delivery for the North Pole. The mailbox in front of Stanley Hardware, which was emptied for the "Letters to Santa" edition last week, gathered three more.

Santa never misses a kid, they say, and we're sure he got these in time.

Dear Santa,
I want Monisal and rollar skates and a talking mator and an acorn please

Love you Santa
From Levi

Dear Santa,
I want a barbie and a journal and a wolf statution for my dad. My Uncle Steve his health, a toy for my cat and

a toy for my Dog and dress. And My grandmom so she don't have to work so much. And DS games for my brothers. Baby Doll I have been really good.

Your Friend,
Alicia Salem
My address is
312 e. commercial St.
Oberlin KS 67749

Dear Santa,
I want a computer, Ipod, smartphone, mp3 player, cloths, shoes, lipstick, makeup, a real gerbil, loitoin, money tree, fantasy hats, new

jackets, and some new drawing, coloring, and painting stuff. And can you put some magic of yours on Tiber to make her better. Merry Christmas, happy new years

Love,
Brynna Addleman
and I hope I'm not so greetie,
(see below)



and some lip balm

Christmas of 1941 turned out to be very memorable for him

My little sister asked Santa Claus a question back in 1941 that changed the way this Man of the Plains looked at Christmas from that time going forward. And at 77, I've done a lot of forwarding.

Our home was in the 300 block of West 15th Street in Hays, two blocks north of the former St. Anthony's Hospital. A beautiful Christmas tree, a real live Christmas tree, I might add, with colorful bulbs and silver tinsel hanging from each branch, was the centerpiece of our living room.

On this particular Christmas eve, my older siblings were again looking forward to Santa's arrival, not for themselves, but for the reaction of the three youngest members of the family: Mary, myself and Jim. We were 4, 7 and 8, and Santa Claus was a big deal to Mary and I. Jim was a question mark.

The older siblings, Norbert, Donald, Dean, Dolores (Tootsie), Gene and JoAnn, were nonbelievers of this guy dressed in red and white, wearing black boots, flying all over the place in a sleigh guided by reindeer, and with a white beard blowing around his face and obstructing his vision, but they did us youngsters the courtesy of not revealing what they knew!

We gathered around the tree on the Christmas eve in question, and under the direction of Dad, organist and choir director for many years at St. Joseph's Church on West 13th Street. He played the piano while we sang Christmas carols, awaiting the "Ho! Ho! Ho!" of Santa Claus.

The stage was set. The presents were colorfully wrapped and carefully placed under the Christmas tree. We always opened our gifts on Christmas eve, not Christmas



Man of the Plains
By Tom Dreiling
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morning. The little voice in my head teased me by asking this question: "Hey, Tommy, if Santa is the one who brings presents, why are they already under your tree?"

A few days before that Christmas eve, I told brother Jim what the voice in my head was saying. Jim, I learned, was not a firm believer, thanks to his buddies. Some of them told him that Santa was just something imaginary. But they warned him not to let on, because if he did, there might be no presents for him. Jim wasn't about to take that chance.

With nine kids and Mother and Dad, the bounty under the tree was modest. There were gifts that fit the requests of the three little people in the family, while the big kids were to receive some clothing and paper sacks filled with homemade fudge, store-bought hard candy, peanuts, a popcorn ball and an orange or apple.

Santa knew exactly when to bang on our door and holler, "Ho! Ho! Ho!" Dad acted really surprised, and hesitated a minute or two before letting him in. The tall, skinny-looking, worn-out Santa asked that old traditional question, "Were you good boys and girls this year?" Like a chorus at a dress rehearsal, we all shouted, "Yes, Santa!" Jim was the loudest shouter! Santa then handed out the

gifts from under the tree. As this was going on, the voice in my head said, "See, Tommy, he didn't bring you anything again. Your Mom and Dad bought that stuff!"

The voice was beginning to make sense.

Little sister Mary was standing next to Santa and looking him over, head to toe. In a polite voice and as sincere as she could be, she asked Santa Claus, "Santa, why are you wearing Daddy's slippers?" Santa, obviously not prepared for that question, cleared his throat a couple of times, managed to yell, "Ho! Ho! Ho! Merry Christmas!" and exited the place like it was on fire!

That was the Christmas that sealed the deal for me: there was no Santa! The voice in my head said, "Well, Tommy, welcome to the club!" It took Mary a couple more years before she came to terms with the Santa issue.

Oh, who was wearing Dad's slippers on that Christmas eve in 1941?

All these years later, I still don't know.

Tom Dreiling of Aurora, Colo., is a former publisher of the Colby Free Press and Norton Telegram, and a former long-time editor of the old Daily News. He is a lifelong Democrat, a curmudgeon come lately and a newly minted Coloradan.

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