

against their principles, it will hurt the least fortunate among us by threatening the much-needed assistance and outreach provided by religious groups across the Nation.

The seemingly endless number of regulations this administration has handed down to the American people needs to end. Let us force the President to govern in a manner that respects the values of the American people, not just his base. Protecting religious organizations from this overreaching mandate is certainly an excellent place to start.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

CHILD FARM LABOR RULES

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I am here today to raise once again a topic about how we raise our children in rural America, and I want to talk for a few moments about the proposed Department of Labor child farm labor rules.

Last week, we had perhaps what would be considered a piece of good news. The Department of Labor announced it would withdraw and repropose the parental exemption portion of their proposed child labor rules. I am worried, however, despite this good news, there are still a lot of consequences that will occur as a result of the proposed rules that are not being withdrawn, and there is no suggestion they are going to be reproposed.

The thing I want to make clear to my colleagues is that while the Department of Labor announced they were going to withdraw a portion of the rules, unfortunately, the majority of what is going to be offensive, difficult, and a challenge for our way of life in rural America remains.

Last year, of their own volition—no direction by Congress—the Department of Labor proposed a set of rules to put restrictions in place upon a young person's ability to work on a farm, including their own family farm. What we are talking about here is youth less than 16 years of age. Those rules, as proposed, would actually restrict the ability of a son or daughter to work on their parents' farm.

The current rule is that if your parents own a substantial interest of that farming operation, you can work on your family's farm. The rules as proposed by the DOL are going to narrow that definition, as follows: If your family operates in a family farming corporation or a limited liability company, these new restrictions would apply. Fortunately, that portion of the proposed rules the Department of Labor has withdrawn, and I assume they will be reproposing what their definition of a family farm is.

The point I want to make is that so much of the proposed rules yet remain, and the remaining portions of the rules still threaten to fundamentally alter agriculture as we know it today. If the DOL rules, as now proposed, go for-

ward, the education and training for the next generation of farmers and ranchers will be severely disrupted.

We have relied upon 4-H, FFA, and county extension programs to provide farm safety training and certification for a long time. The Department of Labor now says they no longer want those programs to qualify because they are too local. They want a national standard. They want to replace with a Department of Labor safety training program what has traditionally and very effectively occurred through 4-H, FFA, and county extension programs.

The Department has, in my view, ignored research that shows the programs we currently have in place with FFA and 4-H and county extension improve the safety habits of young people, and instead criticizes these training programs for being too locally driven and lacking Federal direction. Their solution is to nationalize these programs and have them run by the Department of Labor. In my view, local experts in our high schools, our FFA programs, and our 4-H clubs should be the ones conducting training programs and educating our young people. And parents and communities should be allowed to look after the best interests of their families and their communities and citizens.

The Department of Labor, in addition to attacking the programs that are in place, that are valuable to us in rural America, is also proposing to change the so-called agricultural hazard occupations. The proposed rules would prohibit a young person under the age of 16 from participating—even with the certification and safety training from the Department of Labor—in doing such things as rounding up cattle on horseback or operating a tractor.

The proposed rules say you cannot be involved in production agriculture if you are more than 6 feet off the ground. In today's environment, in today's agriculture, tractors and combines are 6 feet off the ground.

You can't clean out a stall with a shovel and a wheelbarrow. Those are things I am sure the 15-year-old does not want to do, but they are important to a family's farming operation, they are important to agriculture and of value to a young person in their training and developing skills that are important to them for the rest of their life.

They can't work in a pen with a bull or mama cow. Here is one that really stands out to me: No engaging or assisting in animal husbandry practices that "inflict pain upon the animal," such as branding, breeding, dehorning, vaccinating, castrating, and treating sick animals. The "inflicting pain" restriction sounds like something more than an interest—"inflicting pain" sounds like a different standard than really worrying about the young person's safety. These are important tasks that have to be done on a farm and that young people can safely do.

One additional example that stands out to me is that they are suggesting

in the rules that they would limit a young person's exposure to direct sunlight if the temperature reaches a certain limit once you factor in wind velocity and humidity. How does that work in the practical world of agriculture and farming today? For someone in Washington, DC, to propose rules that restrict a young person's ability to work on a neighbor's farm because of the amount of sunlight, wind velocity, and humidity is something that again, in my view, demonstrates a lack of understanding about how things work in the real world.

One would assume the Department of Labor, before making such drastic changes to farm labor rules, would have identified reliable evidence and data to show the need for changes. In fact, the Department of Labor admits it lacks the data to justify many of its suggested changes.

Furthermore, according to the National Farm Medicine Center, youth-related injuries from farm accidents have declined nearly 60 percent from 1998 to 2009. I have no doubt that if you ask a farmer or a rancher about the importance of safety, they would tell you that safety is a top concern, especially when they are dealing with a young person. But they would also tell you that critical to a rural way of life is being able to train and encourage the next generation to safely and successfully pursue careers in agriculture. If today's young person is not given the chance to learn at a young age what it takes to operate a farm, we put at risk the future of agriculture in our Nation.

I have always had a strong interest in agriculture. The economy of my State of Kansas revolves in many ways around the success of farmers and ranchers. Communities across our State are dependent upon the success, the profitability of production agriculture. But I also have known and strongly believe there is something more than just economics to family farms. This is the way that historically, in our country, in our Nation's history, we have transmitted our character, our values, our integrity, our love of life, and our understanding of how things work from generation to generation. It has worked. It has been an important component of our country's history, who we are as American people.

Today, across Kansas, when I visit with business owners, they tell me they love to hire farm kids because they have a different characteristic, a different makeup, a standard that is different from other people. They learn something about reliability and that work does not get done if you do not show up, that it is not about punching the clock to check in and to check out, that a calf is born at times that are inconvenient to a farmer. There is just a different set of characteristics a young person develops by growing up and working on a family farm. If these changes go into effect—and the rule as

proposed is being considered, and it is expected we will have an answer from the Department of Labor within several months as to what the final regulations will be—if these rules go into effect as they are written, not only will we see a shrinking rural workforce, but our Nation's youth will be deprived of valuable career-training opportunities and a certain way of life many of us highly value will disappear.

It is important to us as a country—certainly to a State such as mine—that a young person experience the value of farming. I do not know how many times you talk to somebody who has determined what their career is going to be based on an experience they had as a young person and their ability to know what they want to do with their life is determined by the experiences they had as a young child. Our country cannot afford to lose the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

This rule should be withdrawn in its entirety. We know rural America's values are not always Washington values, and in the weeks ahead I ask my colleagues and Americans across the country to express their opposition to the Department of Labor for this destructive rule. Do not allow it to move forward so we can protect our values for the next generation of American farmers and make sure rural America remains a great place to live, grow, and raise a family.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

TRIBUTE TO ELI MANNING AND THE NEW YORK GIANTS

Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, I am pleased to rise in the Senate today to congratulate Eli Manning and the New York Giants football team for their great victory in the National Football League championship game. As most Senators probably know, Eli is a graduate of the University of Mississippi and he lives in Oxford, MS, during the off-season.

The Giants' 21-to-17 victory was the second NFL championship for this team in the last 4 years.

Eli Manning began the game by completing his first nine passes, which was a new Super Bowl record, and he was named the Most Valuable Player of the game. He became the fifth player in NFL history to win multiple Super Bowl Most Valuable Player awards. During the regular season, Manning threw for 4,933 yards and 29 touchdown passes, including a NFL record of 15 touchdown passes in fourth quarters. He also led six game-winning drives that allowed the Giants to overcome deficits in the final stage of their games.

Manning and his wife Abby have supported many worthy causes and have made a strong commitment to the health and education of young people in Mississippi. They have made a pledge to raise \$2.5 million for the Eli

Manning Children's Clinic at the Hospital for Children in Jackson, MS, and they have also donated \$1 million to start the Ole Miss Opportunity Scholarship Program, which helps children in Mississippi with special financial needs to have the opportunity to attend college.

Manning has served as a member of President Bush's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and is active with many other organizations, such as the March of Dimes and the American Red Cross. His commitment to voluntarism and national service is very impressive and worthy of high praise.

I am very proud to congratulate Eli Manning and the New York Giants as Super Bowl champions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

HHS MANDATE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, throughout my Senate career I have spent a lot of time defending the first amendment. Most of it I spent defending one particular clause of that amendment, the one relating to the right of free speech, but recent events have shown quite unexpectedly the urgent need to defend another clause in the first amendment. I am referring, of course, to the right of free exercise of religion.

Make no mistake, the Obama administration's decision to force religious hospitals, charities, and schools to comply with a mandate that violates their religious views is abhorrent to the foundational principles of our Nation. No one in the United States—no one—should ever be compelled by their government to choose between violating their religious beliefs and being penalized for refusing. Yet that is precisely what this mandate would do.

One out of six patients in America is treated at a Catholic hospital. Catholic Charities is the largest provider of social services to poor children, families, and individuals in America. The Catholic Church runs the largest network of private schools in this country. These institutions have thrived because they have been allowed to freely pursue their religious convictions in a country that, until now, respected their constitutional right to do so. But this ruling should send a chill up the spine of people of all religious faiths and even of those with no faith at all because if the state—in this case, the Federal Government—is allowed to violate the religious rights of one religion, then surely it can violate those of others. If the rights of some are not protected, the rights of all are in danger. Isn't that what history clearly teaches? Isn't that what the Constitution is all about?

The Obama administration has crossed a dangerous line. The Founders knew that the right of religious belief is inviolable. They gave this God-given right the pride of place they knew it deserved, right there in the first

amendment, so that Americans would never have to fear its loss. Unfortunately, because of the actions of this administration, Americans now do.

This is a huge mistake that I hope the administration is currently reconsidering, and if they do not, Congress will act. The first amendment rights of the American people must be protected. Those of us who recognize the fundamental importance of religious freedom to our Nation will see to it that it is respected by this government and restored in full.

I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I want to talk about this recent HHS directive to faith-based organizations on health care and suggest that it is exactly the kind of problem many of us were concerned would develop when the government said it was going to take a greater role in deciding what health care would be like and who would make health care decisions. In this case, what kind of insurance could an employer give its employees if it is a religious organization?

There are several pieces of legislation that might deal with this issue. My guess is there will be several more unless the administration deals with it quickly and withdraws the position they have taken, which is that faith-based institutions would have to offer health insurance policies that violated their faith principles. It is a fundamental first amendment right of Americans to have the ability to pursue their faith-based principles.

In the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, passed by a Congress with a Democratic majority in both the House and Senate and signed by President Clinton, it appears to be clear that this is an incursion that the law itself, as well as the Constitution, does not allow. One of the most objectionable issues about the White House position—the administration's position—is that we want you to change your principles, and we are going to give you a year to accommodate that change.

Principles based on faith cannot be accommodated in a year. In fact, they should not be accommodated in a lifetime. They are exactly that; they are principles based on faith. This is about institutions that run hospitals, schools, daycare centers, all sorts of things under the umbrella of the mission of who they are. This is about how their employees relate to them as providers of health care insurance and the kind of insurance they provide. This is