

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2602

February 6, 2012

INTERNET:
<http://baucus.senate.gov>

The Honorable Hilda L. Solis
Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Solis:

This week the Department of Labor announced they would be revisiting the proposed rules regarding labor regulations for children and young adults working in agriculture. The family farm is an essential and vibrant piece of our nation's fabric, and your decision to recognize and protect one of the long-standing traditions of rural America – working on the family farm – is a step in the right direction.

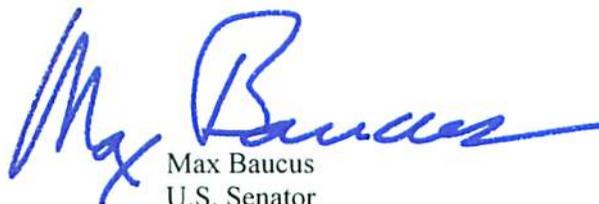
But the proposed rules still threaten our way of life in rural America. Agricultural experience has long been associated with a strong work ethic, perseverance, and ingenuity. Your proposal would keep young men and women from getting that valuable experience that would benefit them whether they decided to become farmers, schoolteachers, or doctors. And especially in very rural communities where agriculture is the predominate industry, farming may be the only option for summer jobs.

Your proposal does not account for the diversity of Montana or the rest of the country, one of our greatest strengths. From coast to coast, there are many diverse cultures that do not fit within the rigid social structures assumed in the proposed rules. And from growing up on a working sheep ranch, I can tell you, many farmers and ranchers have leaned onto their friends and neighbors for help from time to time. Granting only a narrow familial exception such as the one proposed will disrupt these long-standing traditions of community-based, cooperative farming that spans across cultures.

That is why I invite you today to come to Montana, put your boots on the ground, and learn from Montana farmers and ranchers how things work outside of the bureaucrats of D.C. Montana farmers and ranchers are some of the most productive in the nation. I invite you to talk with those farmers, but also with the Montanan youth who rely on work in the agricultural sector for essential skills, satisfying work, and income. They will tell you that they don't need government bureaucrats telling them that they can't ride horses while herding, or brand cattle for their neighbors.

Additionally, I once again urge the Department of Labor to exercise restraint before adopting rules that threaten to upset the rural framework of America. As you continue to review the rules, please keep my offer in mind. It is only by talking to folks who live and breathe agriculture that one can understand the consequences of the proposed rules. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Max Baucus
U.S. Senator