



April 6, 2012

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the First Focus Campaign for Children, a national bipartisan children's advocacy organization, I'm writing to urge you to oppose S. 2221. This bill would prevent the implementation of critical updates to labor laws for children who work in agriculture proposed by the Secretary of Labor. The new rules would significantly reduce the risk of death and serious injury for youths who work on farms, and we believe that they should be implemented as soon as possible to ensure the safety and well-being of young people working in this sector.

Farm work is extremely dangerous for children, due in large part to a failure to update child labor rules for this sector. The agricultural industry has undergone massive changes since the Fair Labor Standards Act was first enacted in 1938, with an increase in the number of commercial farms, more use of heavy machinery, and widespread use of dangerous pesticides. Yet child labor laws for agriculture have remained unchanged for over 40 years, leaving youth workers at risk. Between 1995 and 2002 a total of 907 youth died while working on farms, and thousands of children suffer serious injuries and illnesses each year. The new rules would specifically affect children under 16 who are employed on farms, and would limit only specific activities such as operation of heavy machinery, working in grain silos and grain storage facilities, and handling of harmful pesticides. For more information on the proposed rules, please see the [comments](#) submitted by First Focus.

It is also important to note that the new rules would not affect family farms the way that the "Preserving America's Family Farms Act" claims. Children of any age would not be barred from agricultural work activity outside of school hours on a farm owned by their parents, even a farm registered as an LLC. Children ages 12-15 would still be able to raise animals and help their neighbors on their farms as long as it is not for hire. Children ages 12-15 would also still be able to work on farms outside of school hours (just not in the most dangerous aspects), and youth 16 and older would still be employed on farms with no new restrictions. In fact, the only thing the "Preserving America's Family Farms Act" would preserve is outdated regulations that expose children to unnecessary danger.

Please show your support for the new rules that will promote the safety of youth working in agriculture and oppose S.2221. Thank you for your consideration of this matter. If you have any further questions, you can contact Wendy Cervantes, VP for Child Rights Policy, at [wendyc@firstfocus.net](mailto:wendyc@firstfocus.net).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Lesley".

Bruce Lesley

President