

In voicing opposition to Democrat-led efforts regarding federal infrastructure legislation moving through Congress, O

Republican Rep. Markwayne Mullin has revived a concern long-held by those in the agriculture

industry: a tax on methane. The push for a \$3.5 trillion “Build Back Better”

bill has some on the other side of the aisle expressing concern that needed

infrastructure legislation will be conflated with what Mullin calls “a blank check to take

our country into socialism.” The House Energy and Commerce Committee earlier this month continued

tweaking that legislation, including as it addresses the issue of climate change. They approved

language regarding a methane fee levied on “pollution from the oil and gas industry

above specific intensity thresholds.” A spokeswoman for Mullin said Republicans on that committee tried

for an amendment to ensure cattle operations would not be subject to the requirements;

the effort was defeated as moot based on the current language of the bill.

But does the proposal actually equate to a methane tax on the cattle industry?

Those reading Mullin’s now-widely shared commentary could interpret it that way, but the congressman’s

spokeswoman said Tuesday in an email to Tulsa World: “This is what could happen

if the methane fee were applied to agriculture. Right now the text of the

bill only specifies the oil and gas industry.” She added that the language leaves

room for interpretation as to whether the government’s reach in methane regulations could later

be expanded. Mullin may be concerned after Rep. Lizzie Fletcher, D-Texas, noted in committee

that agriculture is generally known to be a larger source of methane emissions than

the energy industry. In his commentary, he says fees will “run ranchers out of

business,” and he even said various per-cow costs might be levied. The thousands of

people sharing the congressman’s commentary seem to be misinterpreting the federal infrastructure bill to

include an “animal agriculture tax,” repeating a lobbyist group’s analysis that ranchers could be

charged \$2,600 per head of cattle. Methane, a potent greenhouse gas, is produced by

cattle and other livestock; however, animal agriculture is not actually the leading cause of

emissions. The question of whether the industry is most to blame for methane’s significant

contribution to greenhouse gases has come up before. Since at least 2008, the possibility of a methane tax on livestock has been raised, though serious action has never been taken. Mullin spokeswoman Meredith Blanford in an email responded largely with information sent to the congressman by the lobbying agency representing U.S. agriculture, the American Farm Bureau. “Making food more expensive for those that can least afford it shouldn’t be advocated by any government entity. But that is exactly what is being proposed by a methane tax,” the statement reads. Blanford confirmed that the per-cow estimates Mullin shared in his commentary also came from an analysis by the American Farm Bureau. Featured video: U.S. House to vote Thursday on infrastructure bill Get Government & Politics updates in your inbox! Stay up-to-date on the latest in local and national government and political topics with our newsletter. Sign up! * I understand and agree that registration on or use of this site constitutes agreement to its user agreement and privacy policy.