

Oklahoma is facing a threat in Washington, D.C., that could strip our ability to regulate our agricultural products within our borders. The problem lies with one version of the federal farm bill, a large collection of agricultural-related policy ideas bunched together that addresses a broad array of food and farming issues. Within that bundle of proposals is an amendment proposed by Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, that could nullify state agricultural laws that protect consumers, workers and animals, and prevent such state laws from being established in the future. For example, Oklahoma law governs the administration of specific vaccinations given to breeding chickens in the meat industry. Certain vaccines may be used only with the permission of the state veterinarian or in certain outbreak situations. However, the King Amendment could erase this, and it would be a classic case example of the law of unintended consequences. Surely, the people of Oklahoma and their state legislators are in a better position to make decisions about state-specific safety guards than a federal politician from Iowa. Other states that could be negatively affected by the King amendment are those that have laws concerning large-scale dog breeding operations known as puppy mills, laws that ban keeping breeding pigs in cages so small the animals are virtually immobilized for years on end, and laws that protect workers against dangerous farming equipment, pesticides and respiratory hazards. And that's just the beginning. King's vague amendment could affect every state or local law that creates any standard or condition relating to an agricultural production activity. Even laws protecting states from invasive insects and fire prevention safeguards in cigarettes are at risk of being nullified by this amendment. This amendment is both a case of Washington run amok and a tiny provision inserted into a massive bill without any hearings or serious debate. It's another reason why Americans are so skeptical of politicians in Washington. Considering its source, it's not surprising: King votes against the most reasonable animal welfare provisions whenever he has the chance. For example, he fought to stop a bill that would have outlawed the act of bringing children to vicious dog fights. He supports killing horses for human consumption, and

he opposes efforts to regulate private citizens from keeping dangerous wild animals as pets.

King's a threat not just to animals, but to the 10th Amendment's protections that

guard states' rights. The National Conference of State Legislators, Association of County Executives, the

National Sheriffs Association, the Consumer Federation of America and many others also have come

out against the King Amendment. Even the Iowa Farmers Union opposes the amendment. U.S.

Agricultural Secretary Tom Vilsack said the amendment "would create legal challenges and confusion in

the marketplace." House Agriculture Committee Chairman Frank Lucas, R-Okla., would be wise to support

nixing the King Amendment. He wants a farm bill passed soon, but the King

Amendment could bring the whole thing down. Who do we trust to control laws

to protect Oklahoma's residents and farm families — our local elected officials or D.C.

politicians such as Steve King? We need the King amendment stripped from the farm

bill. If that doesn't happen, the results could be more far-reaching, both in Oklahoma

and across our nation. Cynthia Armstrong is Oklahoma state director of the Humane Society

of the United States. Tell us what you think Should the federal farm bill

include a restriction on state laws regulating animals meant for interstate sale? Subscribe to

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