

Brown opposes federal rules on young farm workers

Herald & Review (Decatur, Illinois)

December 16, 2011 Friday

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Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Business News

Section: BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL NEWS

Length: 378 words

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Body

Dec. 16--DECATUR -- State Rep. Adam Brown spoke with reporters Thursday to speak out against **federal** regulations that will prohibit workers under 16 from working on farms.

Brown's father, B&B Farms owner Bill Brown, joined the Decatur Republican to speak about a non-binding resolution he filed in the Illinois House on Wednesday that criticizes recent U.S. Department of Labor regulations prohibiting those under the age of 16 from working on farms unless the farm is owned by their parents.

"I'm a fifth-generation family farmer, my father of course a fourth-generation family farmer," Adam Brown said. "I started not only on our family farm at the age of 12, but our neighbor's sweet corn patch. At 15 I was working on another neighbor's radishes."

Though the resolution won't change **federal** law if it passes, Brown said it would send a strong message to Congress that Illinois opposes the new restrictions. Brown said he has also been speaking with Illinois' congressional delegation about pushing back against the regulations.

"We're sending a clear message to our colleagues in Springfield, not only that agriculture is our top priority in Illinois, but a message to Washington, D.C. (that says) 'Wake up,'" Brown said. "There's a disconnect between the bureaucrats that are setting these policies and the folks that are working day to day on farming operations."

Bill Brown said young **farm workers** are capable of hard and meaningful work, and it gives them income and a source of pride.

"You found out (young workers) really enjoyed it," he said of his experiences **recruiting** his son's classmates in years past. "It's hard work, and it's hot and it's dirty."

Adam Brown said safety regulations for youth workers should always be in place, but the government shouldn't be telling young people they aren't ready to work on farms.

"Just because you're younger doesn't mean you're not useful to society," Brown said. "I don't want the government to be some of those naysayers that say you can't get involved in agriculture because you're too young."

The legislation is House Resolution 680.

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Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Journal Code: HV

Acc-No: 20111216-HV-Brown-opposes-federal-rules-on-young-farm-workers-1216-20111216

Subject: US **FEDERAL** GOVERNMENT (90%); US STATE GOVERNMENT (90%); FARM LABOR (89%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (78%); LEGISLATION (78%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (78%); LABOR DEPARTMENTS (73%)

Company: DECATUR HERALD & REVIEW (85%)

Organization: US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (57%)

Industry: FAMILY FARMS (90%); AGRICULTURE (89%); FARM LABOR (89%); FARMERS & RANCHERS (78%)

Geographic: ILLINOIS, USA (95%); DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (92%)

Load-Date: December 16, 2011