



Opening Statement of Chairman Tipton  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Energy and Trade Hearing Entitled:  
*"The Future of the Family Farm: The Effect of Proposed DOL Regulations on Small Business Producers."* February 2, 2012

The hearing is called to order. I would like to thank the witnesses for appearing today. The purpose of today's hearing is to examine proposed regulations by the U.S. Department of Labor pertaining to the employment of youth on farms and ranches.

Like other sectors of the economy, farming and ranching have experienced profound changes over the years.

The combination of mechanization, biotechnology and the use of more specialized fertilizers, has allowed farmers to grow more food using less land than at any time in human history.

While these new technologies and methods have brought significant change to agriculture, the need to educate and train the next generation of farmers remains as important today as it was nearly 100 years ago.

It has often been said, but needs repeating here: farming is a profession learned by doing, and while school-based instruction is important and can teach youth a great deal, there is no substitute for actual on-farm or ranch experience.

While I am pleased by DOL's announcement yesterday that it was going to resubmit the parental exemption portion of the NPRM, other provisions of this rule will still make it difficult, if not impossible, for youths interested in careers in agriculture to access comprehensive on-farm education and employment opportunities.

I think we can all agree that hazards are present in agriculture, and ensuring the safety of youth is a common goal. At the same time, through proper safety training and supervision, those hazards can be eliminated or minimized.

We are fortunate to have with us today stakeholders involved in that process. They and their families have been involved in agriculture for generations and I think they will bring an important perspective to the Committee's discussions.

Before I yield to Ranking Member Critz for his opening statement, I would like to welcome our colleague, Representative Dennis Rehberg from the State of Montana.

While he does not serve on the Small Business Committee, Denny is a 5<sup>th</sup> generation rancher and has asked to be here today because this issue is so important to his constituents back home, just as it is to so many of our own constituents. I know yield to Ranking Member Critz for his opening statement.