

The Hill OpEd | Sid Miller, Texas Agriculture Commissioner | February 16, 2024

Washington, don't tread on states' Ag rights

Recent events reminded me of a saying we have here in Texas, "Let Texans run Texas." This declaration is a reminder of the importance of states' rights, why we must protect our sovereignty, and each and every state's Constitutional right to determine their own laws based upon what is best for that state. It's a reminder that we are, indeed, the United States of America.

That's also why I've expressed my opposition to a bill in Congress, H.R. 4417, the Ending Agricultural Trade Suppression (EATS) Act, or anything like it. I realize the EATS Act is largely in response to California's misguided Proposition 12, a ballot measure California voters passed setting needless standards on pork, veal, and eggs sold in the state, which came into full effect on Jan. 1.

While I don't agree with Prop 12, I'll defend to my dying day California's right to self-determination, and any state's ability to use its constitutional authority as that state's citizens best see fit.

So, while I understand the motivation for congressional leaders to want to rein in California, the EATS Act or something similar is a massive overreach of federal power. And it's not a surprise that I am a proponent of less government and letting the states create and enforce laws that work for them, instead of DC politicians and bureaucrats doing it for us.

The bill's language is dangerously vague and could have the effect of taking authority over agriculture away from Texas — and federalize and centralize that authority in Washington, D.C. I don't need to tell you why that's a bad idea. The EATS Act would almost certainly trigger years of litigation, and could cost our hard working farmers and taxpayers alike millions of dollars they will never see again.

So, while my stand on states' rights, and specifically Texas' rights, may put me at odds with some well-meaning farm and agriculture groups who support EATS, it doesn't change the fact that the EATS Act, or anything like it, is an overreach of federal government powers over the nation's agriculture industry, holistically, and each state's agriculture laws, individually.

While some may think this particular problem has passed, it may very well be a false lull, the calm before the storm. We need to remain alert because we don't need the federal government wreaking havoc on the 10th Amendment and overriding good, functioning state agriculture laws already in place that protect the health and livelihood collectively of millions of Americans. Just because California does something stupid, the people of Texas shouldn't be penalized. Let's stick with the Constitution and states' rights, and let Texans run Texas.



An eighth-generation Texas farmer and rancher, Sid Miller is the 12th Commissioner of the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). A twenty-four-time world champion rodeo cowboy, he has devoted his life to promoting Texas agriculture, rural communities and the western heritage of Texas.