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The Christmas Tree... Tax?

NOVEMBER 25TH 2011 BY UNKNOWN

The Christmas Tree... Tax?

By Jo Ann Emerson

At first I thought it must be a hoax – a fifteen cent tax on Christmas trees from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. But after looking it up in the Federal Register (the report of all the regulations issued by the executive branch of government), I found it to be true.

Right there in black and white, on November 9th, the Federal Register says, “Under the Order, producers and importers of fresh cut Christmas trees will pay an initial assessment of fifteen cents per Christmas tree.” The new tax is for “an industry-funded promotion, research and information program for fresh cut Christmas trees.”

A tax to pay for a new program to tell us how important something is that we already value and enjoy. Taxing a beloved product so the government can fix its “image problem”? There is no better illustration of how dangerous, detrimental, and expensive an oversized government bureaucracy can be to the health of our nation.

The president quickly backed away from the tax which, in fairness, growers of Christmas trees were in favor of imposing. But the Obama Administration only delayed implementation of the tax after a public outcry had begun. Clearly, this was not a tax the Administration found problematic, nor was anyone in the White House sensitive to the fact that Americans do not want new taxes to pay for programs they do not want.

The dissatisfaction and outrage at the executive branch often defies explanation. I’m as adamant as anyone that the bureaucracy is too big, costs too much money, and sticks its nose where it doesn’t belong. But there are few real-life examples of just how this Administration has taken big government to its extremes.

The Christmas Tree Tax ought to assure us we can all stop looking for that perfect example of bureaucratic excess.

Last year, the Administration wanted dairy producers to comply with oil spill rules for the milk they store on their farms. Because, they said, milk is an oil. Again, the Obama Administration realized it was going too far and stepped back from the regulation.

Yet much more damaging examples abound, like the carbon cap-and-tax scheme to double the energy costs of every family in Missouri. No example goes to the extremes of the new health care law, with massive cuts to Medicare, new taxes on Americans who don’t buy health insurance and thousands of new regulations on employers and individuals

who use our American health care system – in short, all of us.

This is how an aggressive bureaucracy gains a foothold in more aspects of the day-to-day lives of American citizens.

One way to stop this behavior at the highest levels is by opposing the Administration at every turn. Even then, Congress is limited in its ability to thwart the President's attempts to regulate through Executive Orders and government agency actions.

The most powerful way to oppose these creeping assertions of power by the federal government is to make them as public as possible and to express our dissatisfaction with them, loud and clear. It's just a shame that the battle against big government even extends to that cherished family outing to bring home our Christmas trees.

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