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The Fuss About Dust

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By Jo Ann Emerson

The folks at the Environmental Protection Agency are different from the rest of us, that's for sure. Where you and I drive down a county road and kick up a little dust, they see a cloud of "coarse particulate matter" – and they can barely resist their uncontrollable urge to regulate it.

In rural America, we stir up "coarse particulate matter" when driving down an unpaved road, moving livestock, or working in a dry field. Our farms, ranches, small businesses and local economies encounter these conditions all the time. But the EPA would like to stifle productivity, growth and employment if it means disturbing the dust.

Compliance with EPA dust standards, in the open air, as a farm truck goes down a gravel road, is about the last thing from Missourians' minds. And it should be. The mere idea that a federal agency would get so deep into the operations of private businesses is offensive to anyone who believes in the basic freedoms, let alone the free market.

Of course, the EPA now says it will not start to regulate dust just yet. However, I have learned to judge federal agencies not by what they say but by what they do. And there are no guarantees that the EPA will continue to ignore regulatory actions that bureaucrats there have pressed forward in the past. We're not talking about the survival of a small business here, a farm over here and a ranch over there; we're talking about a threat to the survival of whole industries, primarily in agriculture.

It is clear that Congress must be on the record about farm dust, and now it is. I voted last week in favor of the Farm Dust Regulation Prevention Act and, if the legislation sounds straightforward, it is.

Regulatory overreach is a hallmark of this Administration. Time and again, rules and regulations are laid at the feet of Americans who are attempting to do nothing more than make an honest living.

Not only are burdensome regulations out-of-touch with people who are working for a living all over our country, but they are also directly opposed to the economic opportunity and growth that will grow our economy at a crucial time.

Just last week, the administration issued seven new rules. The compliance cost of just one of them is estimated at more than \$140 billion. Altogether, they represent a burden of hundreds of thousands of hours to read, understand, and adapt to new rules. And each one of those dollars and every one of the hours spend struggling to comply with the new rules of the federal government is a dollar or an hour NOT spent on a business, employing a new worker, or investing in the future.

The basic premise of federal regulation is to restrict some kind of activity. When potential regulations reach the point at which we can't even drive down a country road, we have to ask why there is not more commonsense and accountability from our federal government. An administration which fails to answer to working Americans will soon have to answer to all Americans.

Jo Ann Emerson of Cape Girardeau represents the Eighth District of Missouri in the U.S. House of Representatives.

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