

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 12, 2019

The Honorable Patrick Pizzella
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Acting Secretary Pizzella:

We are writing to request the Department of Labor's (DOL) assistance in providing much-needed regulatory relief for our nation's forest products industry through granting an exemption pursuant to the Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 U.S. Code 213(c)(1), (2), to permit young adults between the ages of sixteen and eighteen to participate in and learn the operations of family logging businesses under the direction and supervision of their parents.

The forest products industry is an economic driver that provides good-paying jobs in many rural communities across the country. Nationwide, this sector employs nearly one million workers and accounts for approximately four percent of the total U.S. manufacturing GDP. Additionally, the industry is a leading producer and consumer of renewable energy and over the years has set the global standard for sustainable forest harvesting.

Despite the significant economic and environmental benefits of sustainable tree harvesting, the industry is facing significant workforce shortages that could hinder the future growth of this important manufacturing sector. While we strongly support skills-based and technical education programs, many young people are enrolling in colleges that do not provide students with the skills and training needed to pursue logging careers.

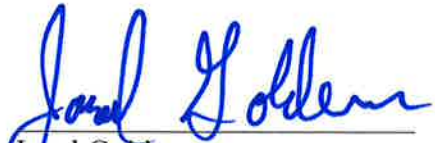
However, much like farming and ranching, the timber harvesting profession is often a family run business where the practice and techniques of harvesting and transporting forest products from the forest to receiving mills is passed down from one generation to the next. Unfortunately, young men and women in families who own and operate timber harvesting companies are denied the opportunity to work and learn the family trade until the age of eighteen.


Timber harvesting operations are labor intensive, highly mechanized and technical careers that require on-the-ground training to promote efficiencies and expertise in performing those operations. This requires young men and women to learn how to run the business, including equipment operation and maintenance, prior to the age of eighteen.

The economic vitality of our nation's forest products industry is essential not only to these local communities and regions but also to the nation's manufacturing base. That is why we introduced the bipartisan and bicameral *Future in Logging Careers Act*. Absent congressional action, we encourage the DOL to consider granting an exemption to allow sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds to work in mechanized logging operations, provided they are under parental supervision.

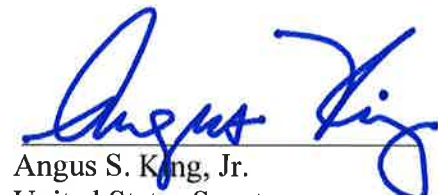
We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this issue further with you and your staff. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.


Sincerely,

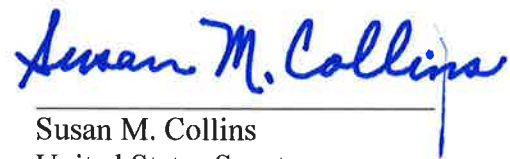

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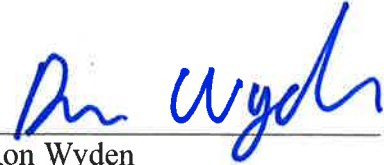

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