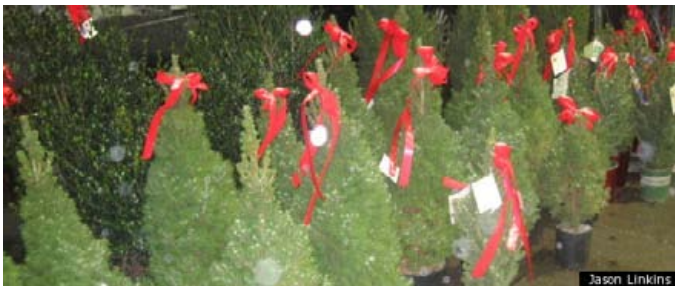


Christmas Tree Tax: Obama Attacked For Agriculture Department Plan To Support Farmers [UPDATED]



industry» (7 CFR 1214.46(n)). And the program of «information» is to include efforts to «enhance the image of Christmas trees and the Christmas tree industry in the United States» (7 CFR 1214.10).

«And, by the way,» said Addington, «the American Christmas tree has a great image that doesn't need any help from the government.» Here's the thing: many of the actual people who grow American Christmas trees don't agree with that assessment!

As Michael Doyle, who got the facts right, [reports in McClatchy Newspapers](#):

Following an extended debate that pit one region against another, the Agriculture Department on Tuesday gave the green light to a new industry-funded Christmas tree promotion program.

By taxing themselves, growers will raise \$2 million a year for ads promoting the merits of real, live trees. Or, at least, trees that once were living, as opposed to the artificial kind that have seized an increasing share of the holiday market.

«As demographics and buying habits have changed we have watched the market for real trees shrink drastically, requiring us to spend much more time and money on promotion,» said Don Cameron, past president of the California Christmas Tree Association.

Cameron and his wife, Carolyn, owners of a tree farm in Simi Valley, Calif., were among the 500-plus people to weigh in over the past year

If you've been reading the Drudge Report lately, you've probably heard about some new plan that Obama administration had just now to finally destroy Christmas once and for all. I am referring to a recent swelling from the brain of intellectual titan and torture-enthusiast David Addington, who is pimping a misleading item about a «Christmas Tree tax» [over at the Heritage Foundation's Foundry blog](#):

President Obama's Agriculture Department today announced that it will impose a new 15-cent charge on all fresh Christmas trees -- the Christmas Tree Tax -- to support a new Federal program to improve the image and marketing of Christmas trees.

In the Federal Register of Nov. 8, 2011, Acting Administrator of Agricultural Marketing David R. Shipman announced that the Secretary of Agriculture will appoint a Christmas Tree Promotion Board. The purpose of the Board is to run a «program of promotion, research, evaluation and information designed to strengthen the Christmas tree industry's position in the marketplace; maintain and expend existing markets for Christmas trees; and to carry out programs, plans, and projects designed to provide maximum benefits to the Christmas tree

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as the Agriculture Department considered the proposed Christmas Tree Promotion, Research and Information Order.

Akin to similar programs that promote milk, beef and cotton, the new Christmas tree program will impose on U.S. domestic producers and importers an initial fee of 15 cents per tree.

Does this seem outrageous? It should actually seem *commonplace*. The effort, spurred by the National Christmas Tree Association in response to declining sales and added cost, is inspired by any number of [similar and successful programs launched by the Department of Agriculture](#):

Examples of other agricultural commodity Checkoffs include the egg, beef, pork, mushroom, milk, and honey, etc. industries. We're all familiar with the dairy industry's ad campaigns; «Milk Does a Body Good» and «Got Milk.» «Pork: the Other White Meat,» «Beef: It's What's for Dinner» and «The Incredible Edible Egg» are recognizable slogans developed and funded by Checkoff programs. These four «big guns» collect between \$45 and \$91.2 million in assessments annually.

According to Doyle's report, growers in Texas and Vermont dissented, and naturally, corporate interests that support the sale of artificial trees were also opposed to this measure. But «[g]rower organizations in North Carolina and 18 other states and regions» were supportive of this program -- which makes sense, considering the fact that the intention here is to revive a declining industry and preserve jobs.

(And, by the way, [this program has been in the works since 2008](#), at which time Barack Obama was not actually the president of the United States.)

UPDATED, 2:19pm: In a gobsmacking move, the White House has buckled under the weight of this dumb controversy and [will now «delay» the tax that Christmas tree growers agreed to that would fund this promotional effort](#):

White House spokesman Matt Leirich told ABC News that despite some media coverage, «I can tell you unequivocally that the Obama Administration is not taxing Christmas trees. What's being talked about here is an industry group deciding to impose fees on itself to fund a promotional campaign, similar to how the dairy producers have created the 'Got Milk?' campaign.»

Nonetheless, the criticisms have apparently had an impact as the program is now being delayed.

So, no help for Christmas tree growers this year, it seems, because the Obama administration lacks the stomach to fend off even the most inane criticisms.

UPDATE: 3:33pm: An email tipster sends word of a further irony in this matter. The National Christmas Tree Association is [supported in their efforts to revive their industry by a PR firm](#) -- Smith And Harroff -- who «[for decades had specialized in Republican political campaigns](#).» On the Smith And Harroff website, you'll find pictures of the aforementioned Smith and Harroff posing with former Kansas Senator Bob Dole, former Illinois Senator and GOP Speaker of the House Denny Hastert, and Jane Hull, the first Republican woman to serve as the Governor of Arizona, [among others](#).

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