



- Photo by Amanda Radke

Harriet Hageman: EPA poses serious threat to ranchers

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Ranch wives from across the state of Wyoming gathered in Casper for the 18th Annual WY Women's Ag Symposium on Nov. 17-18, 2011. Hot topics from the conference including agriculture advocacy, combating the Humane Society of the U.S. (HSUS), social networking training, skin cancer prevention, passing on personal property, estate planning, horse slaughter and beef industry issues.

Opening the event was keynote speaker Harriet M. Hageman, attorney at Hageman and Brighton, P.C., located in Cheyenne. The focus of her presentation was the regulatory environment in Washington, DC and what ranchers need to know. As a professional specializing in environmental issues, Hageman keeps her ear to the ground on topics like water rights and conservation. Here are the highlights from her keynote address:

"It's not news that we are broke in this country," Hageman said. "The current financial climate is a mess. Our national debt has exceeded \$15 trillion; that's more than \$10,000 of new debt per U.S. citizen. In 2009, Congress passed 125 new laws. In that same year, there were over 3,500 new regulations adopted by federal agencies, as well. I keep an eye on regulations such as the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act."

Hageman said the most dangerous threat to producers is the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

"The EPA is one of the most insidious organizations in the U.S., and what they do to innocent citizens is absolutely criminal," she explained. "I don't mean to be melodramatic, but if we don't do something about the EPA, we will not survive. We cannot afford to let EPA continue to persecute, not prosecute, but persecute innocent Americans who have done nothing wrong. Congress must start fighting back. The EPA is a prime example of regulation without representation."

Strong words about a government agency, but Hageman promised she isn't anti-government.

"I'm not anti-government; I'm not even anti-Federal government," she added. "But, I am anti-bad government. I'm not going to beat up on the current administration because it's the popular thing to do right now, but there are some major facts to consider. The Obama Administration's cost estimates for 427 proposed and enacted new regulations will cost the economy more than \$1 billion per year. This cost estimate was announced in August, at the same time we had the debt ceiling debate going on."

According to Hageman, as of November, there are 70,320 pages of regulations published in the Federal Register, equating to 116 million hours of annual paperwork burden.

"Since Obama took office, employment at federal agencies has climbed more than 13 percent while the private sector employment rates have dropped by 5.8 percent," she said. "Our country has worked pretty well for a long time, but in the last 40 years, the fundamentals have changed. I believe we can turn things around. I don't want to discourage ranchers; I want you to take this information and do something about it. I believe the EPA should have to justify its budget each and every single year. I believe we need to work more with our elected officials."

Hageman said Wyoming has an unrealized power that needs to be taken advantage of.

"Wyoming is a powerful state; we are the Saudi Arabia of the U.S.," she said. "We are the number-one producing coal state and number-three in natural gas. We have the ability to force changes in exchange of our resources, and that's leverage that other states don't have. Things need to start changing in Washington, DC."

This state has the power to do just that and end the government's war on the West.”

She certainly presented some weighty issues relating to the EPA, government oversight and the onslaught of regulations coming down the pike that could impact farmers and ranchers across the country. Her solution is simple: get engaged, get educated and be the change you want to see. By creating awareness, building relationships with elected officials and using the leverage of important resources, Wyoming could be a force to reckon with down the road.

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