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Letters to the Editor

Red tape chokes true liberty

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True liberty and freedom is the ability to do something without a permit, license, or reporting from or to the government. Look at your daily activities; what can you do without a license or permit from the government?

If I want to drive with my dog to the shore to walk on the beach and fish, I may need the following permits, stamps or licenses:

Drivers license, auto registration, safety inspection, emissions inspection, certificate of insurance, dog license, proof of certain dog vaccinations, beach tag, ticket to cross the river, parking permit, and fishing license. Some states require a permit to transport fish back across state lines, some fish require a special stamp, some fish require a report of catch, and if the fish have value I may have to report their value on my income tax return.

If I catch many fish and want to sell a few to offset the cost of my trip, I may need a commercial fishing license, a food handler's license and special food handling equipment. This, then, may require me to get a commercial driver's license since I am transporting a product on the highways. I am now clearly involved in interstate commerce which requires me to file various reports with the federal government as well as to comply with OSHA regulations.

If I buy a six-pack at the shore I should not bring any extras back into Pennsylvania without filing out a special form to pay the tax. If I bring back more than a couple cases, I may be considered an importer in which case I may be required to spend weeks of time and thousands of dollars on the application. If the rod or reel was made outside the U.S., a sticker should be attached to them indicating that they passed customs. If I fillet the fish and throw the carcass to the gulls or crabs, I may be liable for a \$5,000 federal fine for pollution. If I throw the carcass out on the side of the road, that is littering, a \$200 fine. If I bury the fish, should I first get a permit to operate a landfill? If I bury the fish in a field containing an endangered species, I should file an environmental impact statement with the federal and state governments and then get permits to proceed. I shouldn't burn the fish without an open-air burning permit.

If I feed the carcass to my dog and he chokes on the bones, I may be guilty of cruelty to animals, a \$300 fine. Oops, I forgot that I left my target gun in the truck of my car. Boy, I hope the B.A.T.F. doesn't find out or I may be ambushed by federal agents wearing masks and flack vest.

Ah! The simple pleasures of life to walk your dog on the beach and fish. Our founding fathers would be so pleased that only 200 years later our government has done so much to so many for so long. Perhaps, Congress and state legislatures should pass one new law this year --- a law that repeals all laws passed since 1950. Think of it as spring house cleaning. We seem to have lost all notions of freedom and liberty.

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(Note: William Taylor Reil, a constitutional scholar, believes the date "1950", should actually be 1860)