



PRESS STATEMENT

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Contact: Rich Robinson, Public Citizen, (202) 588-7773 or rrobinson@citizen.org; Brian Gumm, OMB Watch, (202) 683-4812 or bgumm@ombwatch.org

House Completes Its Terrible Trifecta by Passing the REINS Act

A Statement from the Coalition for Sensible Safeguards

Today, the U.S. House of Representatives, largely along party lines, approved H.R. 10, the “Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny (REINS) Act of 2011.” It joins the “Regulatory Accountability Act” and the “Regulatory Flexibility Improvements Act” as a trio of devastatingly harmful deregulatory bills. The Coalition for Sensible Safeguards strongly urges the Senate to reject the REINS Act out of hand.

The REINS Act represents the most radical threat in generations to our government’s ability to protect the public from harm. The bill would delay or shut down the implementation of critical new public health and safety protections, thereby making Big Business and industry even less accountable to the public. By passing this bill, the House of Representatives has squarely placed the interests of Big Business ahead of the health and safety of the American people.

We are encouraged by the news that if the president was presented with H.R. 10, his senior advisers would recommend that he [veto the bill](#).

The following coalition members commented on the House vote:

“The REINS Act is a colossal holiday present to giant corporations. For anyone who thinks it actually aims to address a serious policy problem in a thoughtful way, consider that the bill excludes rules affecting fishing and hunting (including listings regarding what species may be hunted). If the REINS Act process is expected to work so smoothly, why would there be a need to exempt fishing and hunting rules?”

Robert Weissman, president
Public Citizen

“This bill is designed to throw sand in the gears of federal rulemaking, paralyzing the implementation of already existing laws passed to protect the lives, lungs and financial security of everyday Americans. This is a backdoor way of sabotaging existing protections that are too popular with the public to directly overturn.”

Katherine McFate, president
OMB Watch

“This latest legislative assault would undermine decades of hard work to ensure public health is protected over special interests. We cannot afford, under any circumstance, to eliminate these health protections.”

Charles D. Connor, president and CEO
American Lung Association

“Once again, the House majority has passed a bill that will not create jobs, except for Washington power brokers who will be given new levers to dial down protections for polluters, assist purveyors of tainted imported foods and give a free pass to companies that want to cut corners at the expense of the safety and health of their employers. This bill would drastically change the check and balances of our democracy and make the government powerless to protect citizens from the powerful.”

Scott Slesinger, legislative director
Natural Resources Defense Council

“The REINS Act is an absurd proposal to subject every rule implementing a bill passed by Congress to pass Congress again. It is no overstatement to say it would cost American lives, due to an increase in utterly preventable foodborne and pollution-triggered illnesses as well as accidents claiming the lives of children, consumers and workers. Have the deregulatory disasters of the past few years – the subprime and financial crises, BP, Massey and others – taught Congress nothing? Members are risking Americans’ lives, health and financial security, all in order to help their corporate donors cut corners.”

Heather McGhee, director of Demos’ Washington Office
Demos

“The REINS Act would be a permanent get-out-of-jail-free card for the big Wall Street banks that caused the financial crisis and cost us millions of jobs, and for all finance industry tricks and traps. It would cripple regulatory oversight in areas ranging from the practices of the largest institutions on Wall Street to everyday consumer financial products like credit cards and overdraft fees.”

Lisa Donner, executive director
Americans for Financial Reform

“Under the REINS Act, the work of agency scientists would lose its power to push back against special interests who are more concerned about their bottom lines than our health and safety. Furthermore, when these special interests challenge rules in court, we will see judges with little or no scientific training forced to assess the value of one piece of research over another.”

Frances Grifo, senior scientist and director, Scientific Integrity Program
Union of Concerned Scientists

“This bill would hamstring federal agencies from ensuring that American families are protected from problems such as tainted food, dirty air and water, unsafe drugs, invasions of privacy and

predatory financial schemes. The proposal being considered would delay and even block the implementation of critical protections by requiring unnecessary and wasteful analyses. Congressional gridlock could wind up wasting important agency resources used in developing critical rules to protect public health and safety. Instead of streamlining the regulatory process, these so-called ‘reforms’ waste time and resources while putting consumers at risk.”

Ellen Bloom, senior director of federal policy and Consumer Union’s Washington office
Consumers Union

“The REINS Act would block enforcement of existing health and safety laws by creating new hurdles and impossibly short timelines for approval of critical implementation rules. The bill favors special interests over the public interest. It threatens our nation’s most basic safeguards and it will unravel nearly three decades of consumer health and safety standards.”

Nasima Hossain, public health advocate
U.S. Public Interest Research Group

“American families enjoy the security of a safe food supply, clean air and water, and a variety of consumer protections because our government sets basic quality standards to ensure that business interests do not outweigh the interest of the public’s health and safety. The REINS Act would essentially give Congress a pocket veto over laws enacted in past years, enabling members to halt efforts to protect public health without casting a single vote. I am very disappointed that the House passed this legislation, which would not only create roadblocks to our ability to move forward in protecting public health, but would threaten years of progress. I hope senators will stand up for the health of American families and oppose this legislation.”

Jeff Levi, executive director
Trust for America’s Health

“It is deeply disturbing that at a time when tens of millions of working people in this country continue to struggle to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table, when there are still more than four unemployed workers for every job opening, and when critical supports like unemployment insurance are about to expire, that the U.S. House of Representatives would spend its time and energy on a bill like the REINS Act. In subjecting important safeguards to costly delays and allowing just one house of government to stymie new protections through inaction, the REINS Act threatens our safety at work, our health at home and the integrity of the democratic process.”

Christine Owens, executive director
National Employment Law Project

“This bill is a dream come true for corporate special interests pushing to block or weaken regulatory safeguards in order to maximize profits. It is a blatant attempt by the one-percent and their congressional enablers to force the public interest to take a backseat to corporate power and greed. This bill would allow one chamber of Congress, or even one member of the Senate, to obstruct and upend generations of laws designed to protect Americans from discrimination, corporate abuse, environmental degradation, and threats to public health and

safety. The damage to the lives and well-being of the American people from this unconscionable bill would be incalculable."

Nan Aron, president
Alliance for Justice

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The Coalition for Sensible Safeguards is an alliance of consumer, small business, labor, scientific, research, good government, faith, community, health, environmental, and public interest groups, as well as concerned individuals, joined in the belief that our country's system of regulatory safeguards provides a stable framework that secures our quality of life and paves the way for a sound economy that benefits us all. For more information about the coalition, see http://www.sensiblesafeguards.org/about_us.