

January 30, 2017

RE: Use of the Congressional Review Act to repeal public protections

Dear Senator,

We, the undersigned consumer, small business, labor, good government, financial protection, community, health, environmental, civil rights and public interest groups urge you strongly to oppose the use of the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to repeal public protections that are critical to the public's health and safety, the environment, and a stable financial system that works for Main Street and not Wall Street.

The CRA is an unreasonably blunt instrument that threatens to deny consumers tens of billions of dollars in pocketbook savings over the next few decades from rules that were fully vetted and considered over a long period of time. These rules enjoyed substantial support across all stakeholder communities.

By promising to use the CRA to indiscriminately block a variety of crucial public safeguards, the leadership of the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress has made clear that catering to special interests take precedence over public protections to ensure:

- clean air, water and climate change action,
- much-needed reforms to Wall Street to prevent the next financial crisis,
- banks are held accountable when they deceive customers,
- workplaces are safe from toxic chemicals,
- non-discrimination and fair pay are guaranteed for all,
- affordable access to broadband and secure communications,
- natural resource revenues are used to benefit citizens,
- heavy duty truck rule and air conditioner rule that increase efficiency and save consumers money,
- common-sense gun control measures for individuals with severe and disabling mental health issues,
- paid sick days for federal workers, and
- schools are held accountable for fraud and students are not left stuck under mountains of debt when schools defraud them or abruptly close.

It is irresponsible for Congress to use the CRA to repeal important public protections that are supported by bipartisan majorities of the public.<sup>1</sup> The CRA allows Congress to overturn a recently finalized rule—major or otherwise—through an expedited process called a Resolution of Disapproval. In the U.S. Senate, these resolutions only require a simple majority vote to adopt and then cannot be filibustered or amended.

Once a rule is overturned, it may be difficult for an agency to advance the objectives of the overturned rule in the future. The CRA allows agencies to finalize a rule in the future, but only if that rule is not “substantially similar” to the one that was disapproved. Because the scope of the “substantially similar” language has not yet been tested in any meaningful way, we have massive uncertainty around necessary future regulations that implement laws passed by Congress and address pressing health, safety, financial and environmental risks to consumers and the public.

If Congress decides to use the CRA to repeal public protections that save lives, protect our environment, prevent discrimination or put money back into the pocket of consumers, those who voted for repeal in

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.epi.org/files/2016/LRP-EWG%20Messaging%20Handout.f19-Dec-16.pdf>

Congress will be responsible for the consequences to their constituents. In the absence of strong and effective public protections, Congress will revert back to a system of “self-regulation,” which shifts costs on to the public. As a result, regular Americans wind up paying the price.

Those in Congress pushing to use the CRA rely on two demonstrably false claims. First, critics of public protections claim that potential CRA challenges in the beginning of the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress will only apply to “midnight” regulations that were rushed at the end of the Obama administration. The truth is that virtually all of these standards are better characterized as “marathon” regulations since they were under development for years, if not decades, and are thus the very opposite of rushed. Rules issued at the end of administrations take longer to finish than rules issued outside of this period.<sup>2</sup> Such rules also underwent longer, not shorter, review by the U.S. Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA).

Additionally, critics claim that regulations cost jobs and repealing them will create jobs. The truth is that all studies which linked new regulations to job loss claims have been debunked by independent experts and none of the numerous assertions in the past about job losses due to regulations have come true. For example, the recently finalized U.S. Department of Interior’s (DOI) stream protection rule is crucial to making sure streams around coal mining projects are not impacted by toxic coal waste that can then pollute downstream water sources. Critics of the rule, including U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), have claimed it will lead to job losses in the coal industry. Yet, even Sen. McConnell conceded that repeal of regulations such as the stream protection rule will not bring back coal jobs because market forces are pushing the energy industry away from coal.<sup>3</sup>

Voters in this election did not vote for deregulation of Wall Street, more polluted air and water, inaction on climate change, unsafe workplaces, fewer protections against discrimination and unequal pay, more food safety scandals, the gutting of consumer protections, and more. In fact, this election was a referendum on the need to hold big interests accountable. Unfortunately, using the blunt instrument of the CRA rejects the electoral message and moves in the wrong direction by rolling back and undermining public protections.

We strongly urge you to reject the use of the CRA to undermine critical consumer, public and environmental protections. Please do not repeal rules that enforce the law and protect public health, safety, financial security and our environment.

Thank you,

9to5, National Association of Working Women  
Action on Smoking & Health  
Alaska Wilderness League  
American Association for Justice  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
American Federation of Teachers  
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)  
Americans for Financial Reform  
Arkansans Against Abusive Payday Lending  
Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization (ADAO)  
Catskill Citizens for Safe Energy  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Center for Digital Democracy

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.citizen.org/documents/Midnight-Regs-Myth.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.kentucky.com/news/politics-government/article114197923.html>

Center for Economic Integrity  
Center for Justice & Democracy  
Center for Large Landscape Conservation  
Center for Media Justice  
Center for Progressive Reform  
Center for Responsible Lending  
Center for Science in the Public Interest  
Clean Water Action  
Connecticut Association for Human Services  
Consumer Action  
Consumer Federation of America  
Consumer Federation of California  
Consumer Law Office of William E. Kennedy  
Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety  
Corporate Accountability International  
Daily Kos  
Dann Law Firm  
Demand Progress  
Donovan Litigation Group, LLC  
EarthRights International  
Earthworks  
Environmental Integrity Project  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Florida Alliance for Consumer Protection  
Floyd W. Bybee, Bybee Law Center, PLC  
Food & Water Watch  
Free Press Action Fund  
Global Witness  
Goldsmith & Associates, LLC  
Green America  
Greenpeace  
Health Justice Project  
Housing and Economic Rights Advocates (HERA)  
Indiana Consumer Law Group  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
Janelle Mason Mikac, J. Hegg Law, PLLC  
Jared M. Hartman, Esq., Hartman Law Offices Inc., Semnar & Hartmen, LLP  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
Leonard Gryskewicz, Jr., Sabatini Law Firm, LLC  
Lyons Law Firm, P.A.  
Main Street Alliance  
Mark F. Anderson | Anderson, Ogilvie & Brewer LLP  
MFY Legal Services, Inc.  
Micah S. Adkins, The Adkins Firm  
National Association for College Admission Counseling  
National Association of Consumer Advocates  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Center for Law and Economic Justice  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

National Coalition for the Homeless  
National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low income clients)  
National Consumers League  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of La Raza  
National Employment Law Project  
National Employment Lawyers Association  
National Fair Housing Alliance  
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty  
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund  
National Parks Conservation Association  
National Women's Law Center  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Nature Abounds  
New America's Open Technology Institute  
North Carolina Justice Center  
Oceana  
People's Action Institute  
Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Progressive Congress Action Fund  
Public Citizen  
Public Knowledge  
Publish What You Pay - United States  
River Network  
Secular Human Rights Worldwide  
SEIU  
Tennessee Citizen Action  
The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care  
The Wilderness Society  
TURN-The Utility Reform Network  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
United Church of Christ, OC Inc.  
Virginia Citizens Consumer Council  
Voices for Progress  
West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy  
Western Environmental Law Center  
Women Employed