

May 16, 2017

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and our millions of members and supporters, we urge you to oppose S. 951, the Regulatory Accountability Act of 2017 (RAA). Despite its title, the bill has nothing to do with accountability. Nothing in the bill, for instance, would compel an agency to protect the public against predatory lending practices or foodborne illness. Instead, the RAA would make it virtually impossible for federal agencies to put into place commonsense protections that benefit the environment, safety, public health, and economic stability.

Americans expect clean air, clean water, safe food and surroundings that are free of toxic and hazardous contaminants. Securing these protections often require federal agencies to apply the law through regulations. For decades, these safeguards have saved lives, preserved pristine environments, and improved the health of millions. When these regulations do not keep pace with risks, the results are often catastrophic.

Despite this, the RAA would make even the most critical safeguards nearly impossible to attain by tilting the entire regulatory system against those who think a new rule is needed to protect the public. For many urgent problems, the RAA would impose new, almost insurmountable barriers to rulemaking. It would prime the entire system for abuse by making it far more difficult to uphold rules in court. It would require many rules to undergo discredited trial-like hearings that have been wasteful, ineffective and impose pointless barriers to needed rules. Moreover, the hearings would be skewed by apparently allowing industry but not agencies to cross examine witnesses and by placing the burden of proof on those who support a regulation.

The bill also would emphasize costs to industry over benefits to Americans and set up a system that is designed to shortchange the public. And it would invite political interference by giving White House political officials greater control over the regulatory system while limiting transparency about their activities. And that political oversight would apply even over agencies the Congress has set up to be independent of the president. These are just several of the RAA's provisions that ensure meaningful safeguards are never adopted.

Americans have long relied on a regulatory system that protects them from existing and emerging threats. The RAA casts this aside for the sake of special interests and makes it impossible to protect the safety of our food, to clean up toxic chemicals in our drinking water, and to stop big polluters from contaminating our air, lakes and rivers. Our organizations urge you again to protect the health and safety of Americans and to oppose this dangerous bill.

Sincerely,

Alaska Wilderness League
Clean Water Action
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice

Environment America
Environmental Defense Action Fund
Friends of the Earth - US
League of Conservation Voters
Natural Resources Defense Council
NextGen Climate
Ocean Conservancy
Sierra Club
The Wilderness Society
Union of Concerned Scientists