

Trump executive order vows elimination of government regulations

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31 January 2017

On Monday, President Trump signed an executive order mandating that “for every one new regulation issued, at least two prior regulations be identified for elimination.” Trump declared the measure to be “the largest ever cut by far in terms of regulations,” adding, “If you have a regulation you want, number one we’re not going to approve it because it’s already been approved probably in 17 different forms.”

“Government regulation has actually been horrible for big business, but it’s been worse for small business,” Trump said, posturing as a friend to workers and small business owners. In addition to excoriating supposedly unnecessary regulations, the president stated that the order “goes way beyond that,” adding that the slate of minor regulations passed in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, most notably the 2010 Dodd-Frank Act, were a “disaster.” Trump declared that his administration would do “a big number” on that legislation, without specifying what.

The “one in, two out” regulatory rule would mandate that for every new federal regulation introduced, two others must be singled out for elimination. In addition, the text of the order declares that for fiscal year 2017, “the total incremental cost of all new regulations, including repealed regulations ... shall be no greater than zero.”

Business lobbyists lauded the action, with Jaunita Duggan, president of the National Federation of Independent Business, stating “[The] president’s order is a good first step on the long road toward eliminating ball-and-chain regulations so small businesses can create jobs and expand the economy.” Republican Speaker of the House Paul Ryan responded to the executive order by declaring, “President Trump’s executive order helps bring the nation’s regulatory regime into the 21st century by putting regulators on a

budget, and addressing the costs agencies can impose each year.”

Trump sought to present the executive order as the fulfillment of campaign promises to do away with regulations which were supposedly “killing” American businesses. However, rather than supporting the interests of small businesses, Trump’s new rule would continue the consolidation of big business’s domination over American society, including the bankrupting of small businesses, while facilitating the exploitation of workers and the environment.

Elaborating on the administration’s intentions at a White House press briefing Monday, Press Secretary Sean Spicer noted that the goal of the administration would be to “unleash the American economy,” adding that Trump was focusing on “the energy sector, how to unleash America’s natural resources.”

The executive order comes on the heels of Trump’s meeting last week with manufacturing industry executives, where the president promised to eliminate “75 percent” of industrial regulations. In particular, Trump has been focused on environmental regulations which have placed higher fuel efficiency requirements on vehicles produced in the US.

Members of the scientific community expressed horror at the arbitrary measure. Ken Kimmell, president of the Union of Concerned Scientists, told the *Washington Post* the executive order was “absurd, imposing a Sophie’s Choice on federal agencies.”

“If, for example, the Environmental Protection Agency wants to issue a new rule to protect kids from mercury exposure, will it need to get rid of two other science-based rules, such as limiting lead in drinking water and cutting pollution from school buses?” Kimmell asked. The scientist asserted that Trump’s order was “likely illegal,” declaring, “Congress has not

called upon EPA to choose between clean air and clean water, and the president cannot do this by executive fiat.”

Trump’s executive order would concentrate power in the hands of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), whose agency is charged with overseeing federal regulations. Trump’s nomination for OMB director, Republican Congressman Mick Mulvaney, is an adamant opponent of federal spending.

According to the *New York Times*, “Within the Trump team, the views of Representative Mick Mulvaney... rank as among the most reactionary.” Mulvaney, who according to the *Times* possesses “an almost perfect conservative voting record,” has spent his six-year congressional career opposing disaster relief for victims of Hurricane Sandy as well as backing the 2013 government shutdown, which was instigated by right-wing Republicans in an effort to force the adoption of austerity measures.

Mulvaney is a proponent of ending government-provided health care, having declared that “[we] have to end Medicare as we know it” in 2011 while being interviewed on the Fox Business Network.

The onslaught against federal regulation comes as Trump’s nominees for cabinet secretaries continue to be placed at the head of departments of which they have a record of opposition. Scott Pruitt, Trump’s nominee for the Environmental Protection Agency, has a long career of leading lawsuits against the agency on behalf of the energy industry.

Myron Ebell, who led Trump’s EPA transition team, declared in a recent interview with the *Washington Post* that his prescription for the EPA would see the elimination of 5,000 employees and the halving of the agency’s \$8.1 billion budget. “My own personal view is that the EPA would be better served if it were a much leaner organization that had substantial cuts,” stated Ebell in an interview to the *Post*.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is scheduled to vote on Pruitt’s nomination on Wednesday. In addition, Rex Tillerson, former CEO of Exxon and Trump’s pick for Secretary of State and Treasury Secretary nominee Steve Mnuchin are set to receive committee votes this week. All three nominations would then proceed to the Senate floor for confirmation by the full Senate, where Republicans hold a narrow 52-48 edge.

Mnuchin’s vote was originally scheduled for Monday, but was postponed as Senate Democrats delayed the hearing in order to attend a candlelight vigil opposing Trump’s executive order which bans visitors from seven predominantly Muslim countries.



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