



May 17, 2017

Dear Senator:

The undersigned public health and medical organizations urge you to oppose S. 951, the Regulatory Accountability Act of 2017 (RAA). This bill is a permanent, sweeping attack on the ability of federal agencies to take action to protect public health and promote public safety. Strong federal safeguards are critical for protecting kids, preventing disease and saving lives.

Under the guise of “regulatory reform,” the RAA would make it more difficult for federal agencies to implement and enforce laws passed by Congress to protect Americans from current and emerging health hazards such as air pollution and tobacco addiction. Current law sets out an extensive and transparent process for the development of federal safeguards, which includes opportunities for all stakeholders to provide feedback – including regulated industries, experts, and the public. Rather than improving this process, the RAA would stymie it by:

- Diminishing public input into the process of developing federal safeguards;
- Empowering and elevating lawyers, lobbyists and economists in the safeguard development process at the expense of scientists, medical experts, patients and parents;
- Imposing a series of intentionally burdensome requirements that would slow down agencies’ abilities to respond to health threats quickly based on sound science;
- Giving a single person – the head of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs at the Office of Management and Budget – the authority to decide which safeguards must meet the most burdensome requirements and to dictate agencies’ scientific decisions; and,
- Including vague language and failing to define key requirements, which would make the work of federal agencies subject to endless litigation by powerful interests opposed to the safeguards.

Together, these provisions create dangerous roadblocks that would stall or completely prevent agencies from adopting much-needed lifesaving safeguards. If the RAA were to become law, the end result would be illness and premature deaths that could have been prevented.

Americans are healthier thanks to science-based safeguards from agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which have strong track records of success in setting safeguards to keep Americans healthy. For example, the Clean Air Act requires EPA to protect public health from dangerous air pollution with an adequate margin of safety. In a [peer-reviewed study](#) in 2011, EPA found that steps taken under the Act since 1990 had prevented more than 160,000 premature deaths in the year 2010 alone. The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act requires that FDA act on what is “appropriate for the protection of public health” and oversee the manufacturing, marketing and sales of tobacco products to prevent youth from beginning to use tobacco and encourage tobacco users to quit.

However, federal agencies’ work to protect public health is far from complete. While the nation’s air is much cleaner today than before the Clean Air Act, more than 125 million Americans are still exposed to unhealthy levels of ozone and particle pollution, and current research shows that many pollutants are harmful at lower levels than was previously understood. And kids are still at risk from candy-flavored tobacco products. Federal agencies must continue to set sound, science-based safeguards to protect the public against these current and emerging threats.

We urge you to oppose the RAA. It is a dangerous bill that would leave Americans at greater risk for illness and disease by tying the hands of federal agencies entrusted with reducing risks and protecting public health.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
American Public Health Association
American Thoracic Society
Children’s Environmental Health Network
Health Care Without Harm
National Association of County & City Health Officials
National Medical Association
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Trust for America’s Health