

November 29, 2011

Dear Member of Congress:

As public health organizations dedicated to improving and protecting the health of American families, we are writing to express our opposition to the Regulatory Accountability Act (RAA) (H.R. 3010/S. 1606) and the Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny (REINS) Act of 2011 (H.R. 10/S. 299). These proposals would undermine our nation's ability to protect public health, which is one of government's most basic responsibilities.

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. However, the RAA would prioritize cost to industry over the health of Americans. It would add years to an already lengthy rulemaking process by adding 60 new analytical requirements. This could extend a process that already takes an average of four to eight years for a significant rule, by another two to four years, significantly slowing the government's ability to take action on emerging public health threats.

The REINS Act would require Congressional approval of all major rules within 70 days. Most rulemaking is directly tied to legislation already enacted by Congress – so this legislation would essentially give Congress veto power over laws enacted in past years without Members of Congress having to cast a single vote to repeal those laws. For example, this bill would block implementation of the Affordable Care Act, which requires new regulations to ensure that the uninsured have coverage and that insurance companies provide new consumer protections as required by law.

The ability of our government to protect the health of American families is not an academic exercise – these regulations are truly lifesaving. For instance, in the last several months, at least 29 people in eight states died after eating cantaloupes contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that since the outbreak began in late July at least 139 people have fallen ill in 28 states. Without the Food and Drug Administration's work to enforce food safety standards, we would see many more outbreaks and deaths due to foodborne illness.

The Environmental Protection Agency's ability to enforce the Clean Air Act is also vital to protecting public health. The Clean Air Act has reduced emission of key pollutants by 70 percent and significantly improved the health of Americans. In 2010 alone, the Clean Air Act prevented 160,000 premature deaths; 1.7 million instances of asthma exacerbation; 54,000 cases of chronic bronchitis; as well as 41,000 respiratory and 45,000 cardiovascular hospital admissions. Without the protections of the Clean Air Act, we can expect to see increased illness and death due to these illnesses and a significant increase in health care costs.

And finally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) ability to issue and finalize updated school meal standards for children is also critical to promoting good health and combating our nation's obesity epidemic. Today, more than one-third (34.6 percent) of children ages 10–17 are

obese or overweight. With an estimated 35-50 percent of children's total calories consumed at school, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 directed USDA to issue updates to nutritional standards for school meal programs. The federal government spent \$13.7 billion on school breakfast and lunches in fiscal year 2010, while at the same time obesity results in \$123 billion a year in extra costs our health care system, and ultimately taxpayers, employers, and workers. USDA must be permitted to finalize these long overdue updated meal standards.

Protecting the health of American families is one of the most basic responsibilities of government. The Regulatory Accountability Act and the Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny Act would not only create roadblocks to our ability to move forward in protecting public health, but would also threaten years of progress. We urge you to stand up for the health of American families and oppose these bills.

Sincerely,

American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American College of Preventive Medicine  
American Heart Association/American Stroke Association  
American Lung Association  
American Medical Student Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Public Health Association  
Arthritis Foundation  
Association for Prevention Teaching and Research  
Association of State & Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities  
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids  
Center for Science in the Public Interest  
CommonHealth ACTION & Institute for Public Health Innovation  
Community Action Partnership  
Consumers Union  
Defeat Diabetes Foundation  
Directors of Public Health Promotion and Education  
Institute of Social Medicine and Community Health  
Integrated Healthcare Policy Consortium  
League of United Latin American Citizens  
Missouri Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
National Association of Local Boards of Health  
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators  
National Center for Healthy Housing  
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Research Center for Women & Families/Cancer Prevention and Treatment Fund

National WIC Association  
Oregon Public Health Institute  
Prevention Institute  
Public Health Foundation  
Public Health Law & Policy  
Safe States Alliance  
The Arc of the United States  
Trust for America's Health  
United Spinal Association