

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Thomas R. Carper:
“Toward a 21st Century Regulatory System”
February 25, 2015

As prepared for delivery:

This hearing is important, Mr. Chairman, because regulations are important. We issue them for a number of reasons, including to better protect public health and safety, the environment, and our economy. So whether we're aware of it or not, regulations play a role in our daily lives – and usually in a positive way. We enjoy the benefits of regulations every time we have a drink of water, drive a car, or go to the bank.

While there may be disagreement on occasion about certain rules, I believe everyone generally agrees that some regulation is necessary and good. It's important to note that regulations sometimes come in response to a court order. They also exist because Congress has passed and the President has signed a law that draw lines between what is acceptable and unacceptable in our society, or that directs an agency to take a certain action.

But those of us in Congress cannot legislate every detail on a particular matter even if we tried. And legislative language cannot possibly take into account every situation that may arise as a result of the enactment of a law. So we leave some of the details to the regulatory process.

The regulatory process can be time consuming. It's also more difficult to understand and follow than the legislative process. It should be our goal to have the most efficient, effective, and transparent regulatory process we can have, and to ensure that process results in common-sense regulations that achieve the objectives laid out in the laws Congress passes.

While some people think we need to choose between regulation and having a robust, growing economy, I disagree. For example, by advocating a common-sense, cost-effective approach to our nation's environmental and energy challenges, we can reduce harmful pollutants, lead healthier lives, lower our energy costs, and help put Americans to work manufacturing new products.

Regulations also often provide the stability and predictability that businesses need. And they can help instill consumer confidence in the products they buy. Of course, many regulations do by necessity impose requirements and additional costs on businesses and others that who must comply with them. And it's not always easy for those who want to participate in the process to have a say as a regulation they may be interested in is developed and finalized. So I believe it's also important to conduct oversight of the regulatory process to ensure that we try to reduce burdens and encourage transparency while achieving the greatest public benefit.

I've been encouraged by the Administration's work in this area. I've also been impressed by the personal commitment the President has shown to his administration's efforts to identify existing regulations that should be reexamined or even repealed. It's my understanding that these retrospective reviews have already identified ways to reduce burdens and save billions of dollars. And I expect these 'lookback' efforts to continue to bear fruit.

As I often say when it comes to issues like this that come before this committee, we need to figure out what works and do more of it. This applies to regulatory reform as well. I hope that as this Committee continues to discuss these issues we can take a real look at this process and at the Administration's ongoing efforts, acknowledge what is working, and help them do more of it.

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