

Senator Pryor Opening Remarks

June 23, 2011

Thank you, Chairman Lieberman and Ranking Member Collins, for holding this important hearing on regulatory reform. The Senators represented on the first panel, as well as several members of this committee, have proposed or are considering proposing legislation to improve and streamline the regulatory process. I look forward to working with my colleagues on this issue.

I have heard from many Arkansans and businesses, particularly small businesses, which are struggling to meet an increasing regulatory burden. Each year, federal agencies issue between 3,000 and 4,000 final rules many of which have significant economic impact. There appears to be a lack of transparency and timeliness in the rulemaking process that also contributes to economic uncertainty and discourages investment and job creation by the business community. As a result, our economy suffers.

For example, the EPA is currently considering more stringent regulations of dust as part of the National Ambient Air Quality. From county roads to farm fields, dust is an unavoidable reality in rural areas. Imposing strict dust regulations on these communities would hurt family farmers and rural economies across Arkansas and the nation.

Another example is a new rule that could cost municipalities and states across the country tens of millions of dollars to replace their street signs. According to the new regulations, the lettering on street signs has to be a combination of

lower-case letters with initial upper-case letters. Moreover, the upper-case letters must be at least six inches in height, while lower-case letters must be 4.5 inches tall. Streets with speed limits of 40 mph and over need sizes of eight inches and six inches for upper- and lower-case letters, respectively.

I believe it is time to establish in law principles that are fair, reasonable, and can help reduce the regulatory burden on American companies. I think it is timely that Congress reviews several of the laws that form the basis of our Federal regulatory system and find ways to make these laws more effective in meeting the dual challenges of protecting the public while making our economy stronger and more competitive.

Many of the regulatory reform bills have common themes that I agree with.

1. There is a need for a more robust regulatory impact analysis of proposed, interim final, and final rules that have a “significant economic impact” that considers the effect of the regulation on job creation.
2. All cabinet level agencies, independent agencies, and independent regulatory agencies should be subject to the regulatory process.
3. The Regulatory Flexibility Act, which was last amended 15 years ago, that protects the rights of small businesses needs to be updated.
4. Retrospective or periodic reviews of significant rules could help eliminate or change regulations that are no longer necessary or unduly burdensome

Again, thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing and I look forward to hearing Mr. Sunstein’ testimony.