

Innocuously titled and intentionally cumbersome, the REINS Act would make it nearly impossible for Federal agencies to protect Americans' health or the environment in the future. It already takes many years for federal agencies to create and get approval of the rules needed to implement new laws, given existing review and analysis processes and public comment procedures as well as Congressional intervention. H.R. 10 would make Congress the required arbiter of every technical question and business dispute over a rule and would allow a single chamber of Congress to stop any regulation, no matter what the facts showed. In so doing, the REINS Act would fundamentally change the way our government protects the environmental and public health of the American people.

While Republicans try to argue that H.R. 10 will improve regulatory oversight, the reality is that the bill merely serves as cover to effectively undo existing enforcement mechanisms that members in their party do not support. While Republicans suggest H.R. 10 will streamline government processes, the reality is that bill will make the rulemaking process more cumbersome and enable a new Congress to block the implementation of legislation passed by a previous Congress without actually having to publicly repeal popular laws. Moreover, while Republicans suggest H.R. 10 will ease the burden of small businesses, create jobs and bolster the economy, in action, the bill would bog down businesses and federal agencies in needlessly exhaustive compliance processes and litigation at the expense of American families and opportunities for American workers.

What concerns me most of all is that instead of relying on scientists and issue-area experts in federal agencies to set standards to protect our health and environment, the REINS Act will make politicians in Congress to the arbiters of what is safe for the American people. As a former teacher, I understand the importance of scientific evidence and knowledge-sharing in making wise decisions, and as a Member of Congress, I have seen all too clearly how some of my fellow politicians ignore the evidence when making important decisions. For example, we are living in an era of twenty of the hottest years in recorded history; glaciers and permafrost are vanishing, weather patterns are shifting, access to water is decreasing, and the consequences of sudden climate change, such as rising oceans, increased storm activity, and the displacement of wildlife, are a threat to the economy, our coastal cities, and possibly the very existence of humanity. Yet Republicans in Congress have blocked action on legislation to deal with the problem of climate change, despite what the evidence shows. The public policy that will protect environmental and public health must be informed by the best science, not impeded by legislative gridlock and political polarization.

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The REINS Act is redundant, irresponsible and intentionally time-consuming. Far from streamlining government processes, the bill is yet another attempt in a long line of legislative initiatives presented in this Congress to undermine our nation's environmental, health and safety laws. It would effectively rewrite virtually every environmental and other regulatory statute, making existing requirements unenforceable, and it would discourage federal agencies from adapting policies to changing public needs. The goal of the REINS Act is to neglect the scientific evidence that enables us to progress and paralyze our government's ability to protect American people.

Now, more than ever, Congress must act to protect our public health, food supply, water, air quality, public lands, and financial security. We should not be enacting additional regulatory roadblocks that would erase 100 years of American progress and threaten the quality of life of generations to come.