



May 31, 2011

**An Open Letter to the United States Congress:
REIN In Burdensome Government Regulations!**

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the 362,000 members of the National Taxpayers Union, I urge you to support the Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny (REINS) Act. Introduced as H.R. 10 by Rep. Davis (R-KY) and as S. 299 by Sen. Paul (R-KY), this bill would increase legislative control and accountability over federal regulatory policy by requiring Congress to affirmatively approve any rule that may result in an annual effect on the economy of \$100 million or more.

Over the past several decades the scope and cost of federal regulations have grown dramatically. In the 1950s federal agencies published an aggregate average of just under 11,000 pages in the *Federal Register* each year. During 2001-2009, that number swelled to an average of 73,000 pages per year, and in 2010 nearly reached an astounding 82,000 pages. The explosion of federal regulations has enormous consequences for individuals and businesses. According to a study conducted on behalf of the Small Business Administration (SBA), economists found that the annual costs of federal regulations in the United States had increased to more than \$1.75 trillion in 2008 – a figure that exceeded all corporate pretax profits (\$1.46 trillion) that year. The SBA's Office of Advocacy added, "Had every U.S. household paid an equal share of the federal regulatory burden, each would have owed \$15,586 in 2008." These statistics become all the more troubling when viewed through the prism of persistently high unemployment and a sputtering economic recovery.

By requiring executive agencies to submit major rulemaking proposals to Congress for a vote, the REINS Act would place a much-needed braking mechanism on a federal regulatory state that is clearly accelerating out of control. As economic, environmental, health, and other issues have grown in complexity, Congress has often delegated greater amounts of regulatory authority to federal agencies. Although this has served an important purpose, the high level of discretion granted to agencies to carry out regulatory initiatives has often upset the careful balance between narrow technical expertise and broad political accountability. The REINS Act would begin the process of ensuring that regulatory agencies hew more closely to Congress' intent. Furthermore, by requiring an up-or-down vote, the REINS Act pushes important rulemakings out of the shadows of government agencies. Finally, H.R. 10 and S. 299 would encourage Members of Congress to reflect more carefully on their own legislative responsibilities. After all, the 7.6 billion-hour annual paperwork drain generated by the U.S. Treasury is not just a product of IRS whims. It is largely a result of congressional tinkering with tax laws.

The tremendous weight of our growing regulatory state is a hidden burden on taxpayers and a drag on our economic recovery. H.R. 10 and S. 299 could lighten this load. **Any roll call votes related to the REINS Act will be significantly weighted in our annual Rating of Congress.**

Sincerely,

Brandon Greife
Federal Government Affairs Manager