

April 14, 2015

The United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of Congress:

We are writing, as individuals, to express our opposition to passage of the REINS Act. In signing the letter, we have included our titles and the institutions at which we teach for purposes of identification.

Under the proposed legislation, no “economically significant” regulation would take effect unless affirmatively approved by Congress, by means of a joint congressional resolution of approval, which is signed by the President. If a joint resolution is not enacted into law by the end of 70 session days or legislative days, the regulation is not legally valid and it will not go into effect. As law professors who teach administrative and environmental law, we consider the proposal to be unnecessary to establish agency accountability and unwise as a matter of public policy because it undercuts the implementation of laws intended to protect people and the environment.

We oppose the REINS Act because:

**1). *The REINS Act would replace the strengths of agency rulemaking with the weaknesses of the legislative process.***

The current system of administrative agencies of the federal government began more than 100 years ago, and matured through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was codified in its present form in the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) passed in 1946. In order to take advantage of the scientific, economic, legal, and other expertise in agencies, Congress has delegated to them rulemaking authority. Congress has also recognized that agencies are more insulated from the political process. Although agencies are (and should be) subject to political influence, agencies must also have legal justifications for their actions. When agency rules are appealed, the federal courts ensure that regulations are backed up by reasonable policy justifications and are consistent with the statutes passed by Congress.

While superficially it may seem like a good idea to make Congress the final arbiter of all significant regulatory decisions – after all, Members of Congress are elected and regulators are not – neither most Members of Congress nor their staffs are likely to have sufficient expertise regarding complex regulations to make a considered decision whether to adopt a regulation, particularly within the limited time frame legislators would have to act. Congress has scaled back staffing levels and, unlike agencies, Congressional offices do not employ doctors, epidemiologists, botanists, statisticians, etc.

Even if Congress did have the necessary expertise to review regulations, the type of careful and time-consuming review that would be required would pose a burden on it,

diverting members and their staffs from other business. Since this review would have to occur within a short time frame, the REINS Act has the potential to stop (or at least slow) important other business, assuming that legislators and their staffs actually spent the time necessary to understand complex regulations.

It is also uncertain that Congress can or will tear itself away from other pressing business in order to consider approval of pending regulations. In particular, a 70-day deadline is unlikely to give the Senate sufficient time to pass a resolution of approval, turning the Act into a type of a congressional pocket veto for significant regulations.

Finally, unlike agencies, Congress does not need to have a reasonable policy justification for refusing to approve a regulation. Any disapproval is therefore more likely to reflect the political power of special interests, a potential that would be magnified in light of the fast-track process. This makes the Act a thinly veiled effort to subject regulations to greater political pressure than the opponents of regulation can bring to bear on an agency.

## ***2) Congress already has the power to stop regulations if extreme circumstances dictate.***

The Congressional Review Act (1996) requires agencies to submit new final rules to Congress for review, delaying the effective date of those rules to permit Congress to block them, and establishes a fast-track process for legislation proposed to overrule a regulation. Disapproval legislation must pass both houses and be signed by the President. Congress has only used this authority once, in 2001, to overrule an OSHA ergonomics rule.

More broadly, Congress can at any time narrow the rulemaking power it has delegated to an agency by amending its statutory mandate. This solution to a problem with agency discretion, should one exist, gives Congress an opportunity to consider carefully the pros and cons of limiting agency discretion, as compared to the rush to judgment required by the REINS Act.

## ***3) The Act is counter-democratic***

The congressional review law requires a majority of both the House and the Senate and a signature by the President to change what a previous Congress and President had approved – a law authorizing an agency to adopt legally effective rules. In the REINS bill, by comparison, less than a majority in either house can block what a previous Congress and President approved – the authority of an agency to adopt legally effective rules. This is not democratic; it is counter-democratic.

Moreover, the REINS Act amounts to an effort by Congress to evade responsibility, not assume it. If the President signs a joint resolution and a regulation becomes a law, regulated entities are authorized to challenge the legality of the regulation on any procedural or substantive ground they might have had if the agency itself still had discretion to adopt the regulation as legally binding. Normally, when Congress passes a law, it can be legally attacked, but only on grounds that the law is beyond Congress' authority to adopt the law or Congress failed to use the procedures to adopt the law required by the Constitution. Yet, the language of the REINS Act would give regulated

entities a surprising and peculiar gift, permitting them to challenge a regulation on grounds that would ordinarily be mooted by Congress' passage of the law. It is unclear how Congress can pass a law approving a regulation and still purport to give that approval no legal effect. But the effort to do so indicates that the sponsors of the REINS Act are unwilling to allow Congress to step forward and take the responsibility for passing a law enacting a regulation into place, despite their professed aim of increasing legislative accountability.

***4) If it is not broken, don't fix it.***

While the regulatory system is not perfect, it has over the years led to vast improvements in lives of millions of Americans, by making the air cleaner, the water purer, food, drugs and cars safer, and the environment more secure, among many other achievements. We believe that the REINS Act is likely to disrupt the regulatory system, and thereby deny Americans the additional reasonable protections the system can deliver. And, as we take up next, there is no sufficient reason for to risk this disruption.

***5) The regulatory process is accountable even though regulators are not elected.***

Agencies develop regulations to implement laws passed by Congress, soliciting comment from affected parties and the public. The White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) vets drafts of significant regulatory proposals. Once agencies issue final regulations, Congress has a fast-track opportunity to block them. Members of Congress can lobby the agency during the rulemaking process, and congressional committees can hold hearings to raise questions about an agency's plan to promulgate regulations (or review regulations that have been issued). And, as previously mentioned, regulations are subject to judicial review. The courts ensure that agency rulemakings are consistent with the underlying organic statutes, while also ensuring that agencies have issued an adequate written response to the evidence and policy arguments in the rulemaking record that are contrary to the rule that was adopted. Thus, under current law, by the time a regulation is finally adopted, two and usually all three branches of government have weighed in, and advocates on all sides of the relevant issues have ample opportunity to affect the outcome.

For the previous reasons, we oppose passage of the REINS Act. Thank you for consideration of our views.

Alfred C. Aman  
Roscoe C. O'Byrne Professor of Law  
Indiana University Maurer School of Law

William L. Andreen  
Clarkson Professor of Law  
University of Alabama School of Law

Mary Jane Angelo  
Professor of Law  
University of Florida Levin College of Law

William D. Araiza  
Professor of Law  
Brooklyn Law School

Michael Asimow  
Stanford Law School

Michael C. Blumm  
Professor of Law  
Lewis and Clark Law School

Erin Buzuvis  
Professor of Law  
Western New England University School of Law

Alejandro E. Camacho  
Professor  
University of California, Irvine School of Law

David N. Cassuto  
Class of 1946 Distinguished Visiting Professor of Environmental Law  
Williams College,  
Professor of Law & Director, Brazil-American Institute for Law & Environment  
(BAILE)  
Pace Law School

Phillip J. Cooper  
Professor of Public Administration  
Mark O. Hatfield School of Government  
Portland State University

Carl F. Cranor  
Distinguished Professor of Philosophy  
Department of Philosophy  
University of California

Evan J. Criddle  
Assistant Professor  
Syracuse University College of Law

Stuart L. Deutsch  
University Professor of Law  
Rutgers School of Law-Newark

David Driesen  
University Professor  
Syracuse University

Gabriel Eckstein  
Professor of Law, Texas Wesleyan University School of Law  
Director, International Water Law Project  
Treasurer, International Water Resources Association  
Senior Fellow, Texas Tech Center for Water Law & Policy

Professor Joel B. Eisen  
University of Richmond School of Law  
Richmond, VA 23173

Cynthia R. Farina  
Professor of Law  
Cornell eRulemaking Initiative  
Cornell Law School

David Favre  
Professor  
Michigan State University College of Law

Mark Fenster  
Cone, Wagner, Nugent, Hazouri & Roth Tort Professor  
Levin College of Law  
University of Florida

Thomas G. Field, Jr.  
Professor of Law  
UNH School of Law (formerly Franklin Pierce)

Victor B. Flatt  
Tom & Elizabeth Taft Distinguished Professor of Environmental Law;  
Director, Center for Law, Environment, Adaptation and Resources (CLEAR);  
University of North Carolina Chapel Hill School of Law

William Funk  
Professor of Law  
Lewis & Clark Law School

Eileen Gauna  
Professor of Law  
UNM Law School

Robert L. Glicksman  
J.B. & Maurice C. Shapiro Professor of Law  
The George Washington University Law School

Dale Goble  
Schimke Distinguished Professor of Law  
University of Idaho  
College of Law

Joseph Grodin  
Associate Justice of the California Supreme Court, until January 1987.  
John F. Digardi Distinguished Professor of Law (retired)  
University of California  
Hastings College of the Law

David R. Hodas  
Professor  
Widener University School of Law

David Hunter  
Associate Professor of Law  
Director, International Legal Studies Program  
The American University Washington College of Law

Linda D. Jellum  
Associate Professor  
Mercer University School of Law

Steve Johnson  
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor of Law  
Mercer University Law School

William S. Jordan, III  
Associate Dean and C. Blake McDowell Professor of Law  
University of Akron School of Law

Sam Kalen  
Assistant Professor  
University of Wyoming College of Law

Helen H. Kang  
Associate Professor  
Director, Environmental Law & Justice Clinic  
Golden Gate University School of Law

Alice Kaswan  
Professor  
University of San Francisco School of Law

Alexandra B. Klass  
Professor of Law  
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs  
Solly Robins Distinguished Research Fellow  
University of Minnesota Law School

Mehmet K. Konar-Steenberg  
Associate Dean and Briggs & Morgan/Xcel Energy Chair in Energy and Environmental  
Law  
William Mitchell College of Law

Douglas A. Kysar  
Joseph M. Field '55 Professor of Law  
Yale Law School

Howard A. Latin  
Professor of Law and Justice Francis Scholar  
Rutgers University School of Law

Yoon-Ho Alex Lee  
Assistant Professor of Law  
USC Gould School of Law

Amanda Leiter  
Associate Professor of Law  
The Catholic University of America

Ronald M. Levin  
William R. Orthwein Distinguished Professor of Law  
Washington University School of Law

Albert Lin  
Professor of Law  
University of California, Davis  
School of Law

Jeffrey S. Lubbers  
Professor of Practice in Administrative Law  
American University, Washington College of Law

Patrick Luff  
Visiting Assistant Professor  
University of Oklahoma College of Law

Melissa Luttrell  
Assistant Professor of Law  
The University of Tulsa College of Law

Mary Lyndon  
Professor of Law  
St. John's University School of Law

Jerry Mashaw  
Sterling Professor of Law  
Yale Law School

Bradford Mank  
James Helmer, Jr. Professor of Law  
University of Cincinnati College of Law

Charles A. Marvin  
Professor of Law  
Georgia State Law School

Patricia Ross McCubbin  
Professor of Law  
Southern Illinois University School of Law

Thomas O. McGarity  
Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Endowed Chair in Administrative Law  
University of Texas at Austin School of Law

Patrick C. McGinley  
Judge Charles H. Haden II Professor of Law  
College of Law  
West Virginia University

Gillian Metzger  
Professor of Law  
Columbia Law School

Professor Joel A. Mintz  
Professor of Law  
Nova Southeastern University, and  
Visiting Professor of Law  
University of Florida Levin College of Law

Morell E. Mullins  
Professor Emeritus  
University of Arkansas at Little Rock  
William H. Bowen School of Law

Kenneth M. Murchison  
Professor Emeritus  
Paul M. Hebert Law Center  
Louisiana State University



Richard Murphy  
AT&T Professor of Law  
Texas Tech University Law School

Craig N. Oren  
Professor  
Rutgers School of Law

Hari M. Osofsky  
Associate Professor, University of Minnesota Law School  
Associate Director of Law, Geography & Environment, Consortium on Law  
and Values in Health, Environment & the Life Sciences  
Adjunct Associate Professor of Geography

Dave Owen  
Associate Professor  
University of Maine School of Law

Richard Pierce  
Lyle T. Alverson Professor of Law  
George Washington University Law School

Zygmunt Jan Broël Plater  
Professor of Law  
Boston College Law School

Marc R. Poirier  
Professor of Law and Martha Traylor Research Scholar  
Seton Hall University School of Law

Andrew F. Popper  
Professor of Law  
American University, Washington College of Law

Ann Powers  
Associate Professor  
Center for Environmental Legal Studies  
Pace Law School

Melissa Powers  
Assistant Professor of Law  
Lewis & Clark Law School

Edward P. Richards  
Director, Program in Law, Science, and Public Health  
Clarence W. Edwards Professor of Law  
LSU Law School

Daniel J. Rohlf  
Professor of Law  
Of Counsel, Pacific Environmental Advocacy Center  
Lewis and Clark Law School

Noah M. Sachs  
Associate Professor, University of Richmond School of Law  
Director, Merhige Center for Environmental Studies

Michael Sant' Ambrogio  
Associate Professor of Law  
Michigan State University College of Law

Shelley Ross Saxer  
Pepperdine University School of Law  
Professor of Law

Reuel Schiller  
Professor of Law  
University of California  
Hastings College of the Law

Joshua Schwartz  
E.K. Gubin Professor of Government Contracts Law  
George Washington University Law School

Peter Shane  
Jacob E. Davis and Jacob E. Davis II Chair in Law  
Moritz College of Law  
Ohio State University

Sidney Shapiro  
Fletcher Chair in Administrative Law  
Wake Forest University School of Law

Amy Sinden  
Professor  
Temple University Beasley School of Law

Mark Squillace  
Professor of Law  
University of Colorado Law School

Peter L. Strauss  
Betts Professor of Law  
Columbia Law School

Margaret Taylor  
Professor of Law  
Wake Forest University School of Law

Joseph P. Tomain  
Dean Emeritus and the Wilbert & Helen Ziegler Professor of Law  
University of Cincinnati College of Law

David M. Uhlmann  
Jeffrey F. Liss Professor from Practice  
Director, Environmental Law and Policy Program  
University of Michigan Law School

Bill Want  
Associate Professor  
Charleston School of Law

Jonathan Weinberg  
Professor of Law  
Wayne State University

***Note: Institutions listed for identification purposes only. The signators do not purport to represent the views of their institutions.***