

Republicans Take Anti-Regulation Stance for 2012

LARRY MARGASAK, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) - On issues ranging from the air we breathe to the noise we make, the business community is telling the government to get out of its hair. And the Republicans, looking toward the 2012 elections, are listening.

The House's principal investigative panel, the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, is taking its turn Thursday in a hearing designed to give a voice to business complaints about government regulations.

The entire House, meanwhile, could vote this week to direct 10 committees to compile an inventory of rules that adversely affect jobs. The resolution has no practical effect because committee chairmen already are under instructions from the Republican leadership to get rid of or modify rules that businesses don't like.

But there may be a political bounce, and the GOP has scheduled more than nine hours of debate so its members can get dozens of anti-regulation sound bites.

Thursday's hearing, to be chaired by Rep. Darrell Issa of California, will include the National Association of Manufacturers, the Black Chamber of Commerce, the Western Growers Association and owners of small businesses, among others.

A Democratic staff memo complained that Issa's letters to businesses, seeking comments on harmful rules, "did not request information about the benefits to the overall economy or to the health, safety and welfare of American workers and families. The letters were sent primarily to industry groups and others seeking to repeal regulations, while excluding industry, consumer and other groups that support the protections these regulations were designed to safeguard."

Issa has received some 200 suggestions from businesses, many of them longtime complaints about the Environmental Protection Agency's pollution control efforts and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's workplace rules.

Recent additions to the business hit list include complaints about a law passed last year to overhaul the country's financial regulations. Businesses don't like the sweeping powers of a new consumer protection agency, or a Securities and Exchange Commission proposal to require businesses to identify their "conflict minerals" - those mined in conditions of armed conflict and human rights abuses.

A report by Issa's staff acknowledged that rules such as the conflict minerals proposal have a good purpose - in this case, preventing atrocities - but also have a negative effect on business costs and time. The proposal would require a company to disclose to the SEC whether its conflict minerals originated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or an adjoining country.

The most complaints were against the EPA. Issa's staff report said the agency "has issued a host of new regulations affecting coal-generated power, directing these plants to purchase costly new equipment."

The report mentioned EPA regulation of greenhouse gases as a pollutant, as well as increased scrutiny of other emissions.

"EPA is also proposing a cascade of new standards for already regulated emissions such as nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide and ozone, some of which had their standards updated as recently as 2008," the report said.

The report said small businesses are concerned about proposed workplace "Right to Know" rules that would require all employers to disclose to all workers whether they are legally considered employees or independent contractors. Businesses would have to provide an analysis of how their pay is computed. Employers are concerned the proposal could expose them to monetary penalties if they make errors in calculation.

Another sore point is OSHA's proposed changes in workplace noise standards. Nearly 30 business groups complained that the proposal "would reverse decades of agency precedent that currently allows employers to provide . personal protective equipment such as ear plugs or ear muffs, instead of more costly administrative or engineering controls."

Businesses also objected to a proposed workplace rule that would require an injury and illness prevention program. Responders did not "take issue with OSHA's emphasis on workplace safety; instead, they view OSHA's formal program as a mandate that will undermine their current safety programs and lead to inconsistent and unpredictable safety violations by OSHA inspectors," the report said.

The new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, created by the financial overhaul bill, will have an "unprecedented amount of authority to regulate the market for consumer financial products in the years to come," businesses told Issa.

Source URL (retrieved on 04/02/2015 - 1:25am):

<http://www.chem.info/news/2011/02/republicans-take-anti-regulation-stance-2012>