



## Senator pushes budget for regulations



Greg Nash

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Sen. **Mike Lee** (R-Utah) is reviving legislation that would force the president to create a separate budget specifically for regulations.

The senator's Regulatory Assessment Act, last introduced in December 2014, would require the president to submit a budget to Congress that details the estimated cost of each rule in the semiannual regulatory agenda.

The regulatory budget, an aide to Lee said, would also give a total amount for how much regulations will cost the economy over the next five years. Federal agencies would be asked to estimate costs and choose which rules to prioritize.

It would also put regulatory spending through the appropriations process, allowing the House and Senate Budget committees to set an overall cap. It would then be up to the Appropriation committees to enforce the regulatory budget in annual spending bills.

The legislation is part of Lee's Article I project, an initiative he's undertaken with various House and Senate lawmakers to reassert Congress's powers under Article I on the Constitution. The project includes regulatory, budget process and civil service reforms.

He plans to introduce the regulatory budget proposal as a stand-alone bill as early as next month, according to his aide.

The proposal could garner support from Republicans in the White House race.

Lee, who was elected in the Tea Party wave of 2010, endorsed Sen. **Ted Cruz** (R-Texas) for president last week, becoming the first sitting senator to do so.

But even if the plan doesn't catch on with the 2016 contenders, it has the backing of at least one prominent group in Washington.

The Center for Regulatory Effectiveness (CRE), a watchdog group funded by the business community, says Lee's bill is the only regulatory reform bill it plans to actively promote.

Jim Tozzi, a member of the CRE's board of advisers, said more than two dozen other regulatory reform bills that have been introduced on Capitol Hill have failed to advance because they do little more than slow the regulatory process.

"Every time there's a problem with regulations, bureaucrats put more obstacles in the way and regulators find ways around them. Whereas setting an absolute total would get to the bottom line and create a controlled system that has a chance of working," Tozzi said.

Though the CRE does not oppose the other regulatory reform proposals, Tozzi said the group wants to see a cap on regulatory costs.

"We'd rather spend our limited time and resources on a mechanism that will control the size of the regulatory state as opposed to slowing it down," he said.

Opponents have criticized the regulatory budget proposal as a "radical idea."

Amit Narang, the regulatory policy advocate for Public Citizen's Congress Watch division, said President Obama and the Senate have already rejected similar reform proposals.

"Irrespective of whether the model is politically possible under a new president, I think that the way in which it would strangle the regulatory system generally is a real problem, and I don't think any version of the regulatory budget model would be good for public health and safety," he said.

Narang pointed to the Searching for and Cutting Regulations That Are Unnecessarily Burdensome Act, better known as the SCRUB Act, which passed the House but has yet to get a committee hearing in the Senate. That legislation, introduced by Sen. **Orrin Hatch** (R-Utah), would establish a bipartisan commission to review existing federal regulations and identify rules that should be repealed.

The SCRUB Act and Lee's Regulatory Assessment Act assume the country now has the perfect level of health and safety regulations, Narang said.

"The premise that our country can't afford any new regulations unless we repeal an old one simply is not true," he said. "What the country cannot afford is another deregulation-driven Wall Street crash or lack of regulation leading to public health and safety crisis after public health and safety crisis."

The House Oversight subcommittee on government operations is scheduled to hold a hearing on Tuesday to review the oversight of the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), which must review and sign off on all proposed and final rules.

OIRA Administrator Howard Shelanski is expected to testify, along with Michelle Sager, the director of strategic issues at the Government Accountability Office.

**TAGS: Orrin Hatch, Ted Cruz, Mike Lee**

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