

Message to the Congress on the Publication of the Regulatory Program of the United States Government

August 8, 1985

To the Congress of the United States:

The publication of The Regulatory Program of the United States Government marks a major milestone in our continuing effort to make government more accountable to the American people and more responsive to their needs. This document presents, for the first time, a comprehensive program of regulatory policy to be carried out over the coming year.

Regulations are a feature of almost every government program. Though many regulations accomplish worthwhile ends, we should not forget the huge hidden costs they entail. The Federal government mandates tens of billions of dollars of expenditures every year -- dollars paid for by the people but not included in any of the Federal budget accounts, not appropriated by the Congress, and not constrained by any spending limits.

Before 1980, these regulatory expenditures had grown out of control. More pages were published in the Federal Register in 1980 than during the entire period between 1936 and 1945 -- the first 10 years of the Register. Paperwork burdens had grown such that by 1980, almost two billion hours were expended annually by businesses and individuals to satisfy the Federal government. Estimates are that Federal government regulations imposed costs of over \$100 billion annually by 1980, adding significantly to the burden imposed on the economy by excessive Federal spending. It has become essential that tools be developed to plan the rational evolution of Federal regulatory requirements.

In 1981, I issued Executive Order No. 12291 setting forth my regulatory principles and, under the Paperwork Reduction Act, my Administration mounted an attack to reduce the paperwork burden. These efforts have helped to reverse the trend of more intrusive and burdensome Federal regulations and paperwork. But more was needed.

The Regulatory Program is a critical step in this process. In order to see that the laws are faithfully executed, and that the policies of this Administration are reflected in the regulations issued under those laws, I issued Executive Order No. 12498 initiating this Regulatory Program. The Program covers the decisions that are within the scope of discretion afforded to the Executive agencies by law and describes the underlying policies and priorities that will influence those decisions.

To set goals and priorities for different programs, government officials must choose the right regulatory tools and identify legitimate needs for regulation as opposed to those that merely benefit special interests. Because some complex regulations take years to develop, involving studies, surveys, and the identification and selection of regulatory options, it is important that senior Federal officials be able to review regulatory options early in the rulemaking process and plan regulatory actions over a longer time horizon. It is also important that they examine and reexamine the nearly 200 volumes of existing regulations to see what regulations need to be modified or have outlived their usefulness.

This year's Regulatory Program is the first in an annual series that will document the efforts of my Administration to manage Federal regulatory programs. This should lead to an increased level of predictability, consistency, accountability, and rationality in Federal regulatory activity.

The objectives of the Regulatory Program are to:

- Create a coordinated process for developing on an annual basis the Administration's Regulatory Program;
- Establish Administration regulatory priorities;
- Increase the accountability of agency heads for the regulatory actions of their agencies;
- Provide for presidential oversight of the regulatory process;
- Reduce the burdens of existing and future regulations;
- Minimize duplication and conflict of regulations; and
- Enhance public and congressional understanding of the Administration's regulatory objectives.

All of this cannot be accomplished simply by publishing a book. This Regulatory Program is the end product of a long process of agencies planning their regulatory activities: gathering and reviewing information, evaluating past progress and program effectiveness, and setting goals and priorities. The publication of the Regulatory Program for 1985 is, however, only the first step in this annual planning process. The next step is for each agency to implement its part of this first Program, as planned and on schedule.

My goal remains to have a government that regulates only where necessary and as efficiently and fairly as possible.

Ronald Reagan

The White House,

August 8, 1985.