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Industry poll finds broad support for easing regulations on business

By Bernie Becker - 02/21/12 02:22 PM ET

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A solid majority of Americans want to rein in federal regulations, and also believe government rules are stifling small businesses, according to a new poll conducted for a key business advocate.

The poll for the National Federation of Independent Business, a copy of which was obtained by The Hill, found that roughly three out of four registered voters thought there were too many pending regulations.

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More than six in 10 respondents also thought that federal regulations are causing more harm than help for small businesses, and around 70 percent had a negative response to a group of more than 200 economically significant regulations.

Former Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.), who is working with NFIB on a campaign to

ease the regulatory burden on small businesses, said the poll showed the public thought that not only were there too many government regulations, but that new rules were coming too swiftly as well.

"The proof is in the pudding," Lincoln told The Hill. "There is no doubt that people do negatively react in large numbers to 4,200 new regulations in the pipeline."

The poll — which was conducted by Voter/Consumer Research, a company with significant GOP ties that a pollster for former President George W. Bush helped

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start — also found broad support for **five principles** that NFIB is pushing for when it comes to regulations.

Nine in 10 registered voters believe agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency should try to avoid fining small businesses for a first regulatory violation, while around 80 percent thought that regulations should be grounded in hard science and objective data.

ADVERTISEMENT The poll comes as government regulations continue to be a prominent topic in Washington, as policymakers look to boost the economy in this election year.

Republicans in particular have said that lessening the regulatory burden on businesses would give the economy a jolt, and House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Va.) said over the weekend that House Republicans would look in the coming weeks to roll back certain regulations.

The Obama administration released a plan last year to streamline regulations, but some business groups, including NFIB, said the proposals didn't go far enough. The administration has said more recently that individual agencies have released proposals on regulations and reporting that would save billions of dollars.

“Over the next five years, more than \$10 billion in savings are anticipated from just a small fraction of the hundreds of initiatives now underway,” Cass Sunstein, a top administration regulatory official, **wrote in a January blog post.**

Other polling on regulations has, at the very least, found that Americans appear to have a more skeptical view of government regulation than residents of other industrial countries.

A **survey** from the public relations company Edelman from late last year found that 37 percent of Americans believe that the government does not regulate business enough, while 31 percent believe there are too many rules and 17 percent believe the government is striking the right balance.

Edelman also found that, in roughly two dozen other countries, between 4 percent and 28 percent of respondents thought that their governments were overregulating. On the flip side, roughly three quarters of Chinese wanted more regulation, as did more than four in 10 Germans.

A *New York Times* **poll** from last fall also found that half of Americans thought it would be a good idea to roll back regulations in order to create jobs, and Gallup **reported** this month that almost half of small businesses that aren't hiring cited rules and regulations as one of their impediments.

But a poll conducted for a coalition of groups that have taken liberal economic positions found that small-business owners saw weak demand as their biggest challenge, with only 14 percent singling out regulations as their most important problem.

The groups for whom that poll was conducted — the American Sustainable Business Council, Main Street Alliance and Small Business Majority — have all called for higher taxes on the wealthiest households, among other ideas.

Lincoln and NFIB launched their initiative, Small Businesses for Sensible Regulations, last summer in six states — Florida, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia — that are seen as likely to play a large role in this year's presidential campaign.

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The former Arkansas senator said that she hopes the campaign will expand soon, and that the initiative has given a greater voice to small businesses that are worried about the number of regulations on the books.

And even as Republicans and some business advocates still decry the level of government regulations, Lincoln also said she believes that the White House is hearing the concerns of small businesses.

"I think the administration has heard a lot of what we've been saying," she said. "What we want to see happen is not only a delay of regulations, but to put in place a process that would eliminate some of the redundancies."

The new NFIB poll also found that around three out of four voters think the government should concentrate on jobs, and not issuing new regulations.

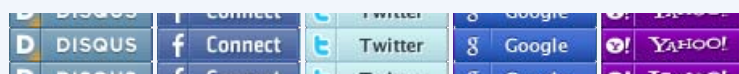
But Lincoln suggested that job creation and regulations could easily coexist, and were not an either/or proposition.

"This is not a campaign to say let's eliminate all regulations," Lincoln said. "People still want safe drinking water and safe working conditions. We just think it can be done in a smarter way."

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ROTFL. The only thing more ridiculous than this push poll is The Hill doing an article on it.



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