



Avoiding the Deregulatory Trap

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The Trump administration has made “deregulation” a central component of its agenda. But engaging in a [discussion of “deregulation” is a trap](#): the real debate is not over deregulation, but is actually about the distribution of power in markets, meaning who writes the rules that govern a market and, as a result, who benefits from those rules.

Supporters of sensible safeguards should stop using the deregulation frame for three reasons:

- It obscures the fact that every market has rules – if they are not established by the government, then they will be made by powerful corporations and billionaires and will benefit those actors at the expense of others.
- It shifts focus from the goal of safeguards – keeping people safe and healthy – to their impact on regulated entities.
- It minimizes the perspective of workers, consumers, and the public, and adopts the viewpoint of the powerful economic actors being regulated.

Efforts to weaken or eliminate public safeguards should be analyzed in terms of what they reveal about the administration’s goals, meaning who benefits, who is harmed in the process, and how those impacts occur.

But what does that look like in practice? This fact sheet provides examples of how to avoid the deregulatory frame in addressing the Trump administration’s attacks on critical safeguards.

Example 1: The Trump administration loosens standards for air pollution from power plants.

Don’t adopt the deregulatory frame: “The Trump administration’s dangerous deregulatory agenda is eliminating rules intended to keep people safe from pollution, putting all of our health at serious risk. By rolling back regulations that keep power plants from putting toxins in the air, this latest action will increase respiratory and lung diseases.”

Instead focus on the shift in power: “The Trump administration is rigging the system so that corporate polluters can profit at the expense of your health, letting them put dangerous chemicals into the air that can cause serious medical issues. We had rules to make sure power plants don’t

pollute our air, but now Trump is changing them to put their profits over you and your family's health."

Example 2: The Trump administration eliminates workplace safety standards that your organization helped put into place in a prior administration.

Don't adopt the deregulatory frame: "We fought hard to get into place important safety rules and now the Trump administration is trying to roll them back. Fewer safety rules in workplaces puts workers at greater risk for serious injuries or death."

Instead focus on the shift in power: "We fought hard to make sure companies treated their workers fairly and gave them a safe place to work. But the Trump administration cares more about unscrupulous companies than everyday workers. That's why it's letting these companies pad their profits by forcing workers into unsafe conditions that could lead to serious injury or death."

Example 3: The Trump administration weakens limits on the extortionary fees companies can charge consumers.

Don't adopt the deregulatory frame: "The Trump administration is eliminating marketplace protections that keep corporate bad actors from profiting off of scams and hidden fees."

Instead focus on the shift in power: "The Trump administration is making it easier for large corporations to scam people out of their hard-earned money with hidden fees. We don't need the system tilted even more in favor of large corporations; we need an administration that will fight for hard-working consumers."

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