

July 7, 2015

Dear Member of Congress:

The Coalition for Sensible Safeguards (CSS), an alliance of over 150 labor, scientific, research, good government, faith, community, health, environmental, and public interest groups, strongly urges you to avoid using the annual appropriations bills as a backdoor mechanism for advancing policy initiatives far afield from spending priorities, especially policy riders designed to block federal agencies from fulfilling their legislative missions: protecting public health, safety, and the environment, ensuring the stability of our financial system, and promoting transparency and accountability in government.

These policy riders are fundamentally anti-democratic, since by design they have not received scrutiny in floor debate, in committee or through public hearings.

Many of the riders included in the current appropriations process advance the narrow interests of particular industries at the expense of public health, safety, financial security and the environment. They also subvert the ability of federal agencies to use scientific information to inform public policy.

Examples in FY 16 spending bills are riders that would:

- Bar the Occupational Safety and Health Administration from issuing a final rule, years in the making, to protect workers from toxic silica dust until it spends up to \$800,000 on an unnecessary scientific study to provide “epidemiological justification” for imposing exposure limits, ensuring further delay and more diseases and deaths. When the new rule is established, it will prevent 700 deaths a year and 1,600 new cases of silicosis annually. (Senate Labor-HHS)
- Weaken a pending Food and Drug Administration rule on flavored electronic-cigarettes and flavored cigars by exempting these tobacco products currently on the market from any regulation; this will limit the agency’s ability to protect children and teens from these harmful products. (House Agriculture-FDA)
- Block the Securities and Exchange Commission from requiring publicly traded companies to disclose their political spending; and prevent the administration from requiring federal contractors to disclose their political spending (House Financial Services)
- Continue to block rules that would place stricter limits on the number of hours truckers could work without a rest break despite traffic safety concerns that trucker fatigue causes serious accidents; (House Transportation-HUD)
- Ban the Army Corps of Engineers from revising the term “fill”, effectively preventing the agency from prohibiting mining companies from dumping toxic waste materials from mountaintop removal operations into streams and rivers. (House and Senate Energy and Water)

- Eliminate any funding for the Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research, created by Congress to provide federal agencies with scientific evidence to improve the safety, affordability and accessibility of health care to the American public; (House Labor HHS)
- Impose a vaguely worded gag order on EPA officials that would make it nearly impossible for the agency to publicly disclose its assessments of the impact of pending legislation. (Senate EPA-Interior)
- Force the Consumer Financial Protection Board to redo a study on forced arbitration, a tactic increasingly used by corporations to deny consumers and or employees access to the courts to settle disputes; (House Financial Services)
- Impede efforts by the Federal Communications Commission, an independent agency, to implement its regulation on net neutrality, ensuring Internet users equal access; (House Financial Services).
- Prohibit the Department of Labor from finalizing or enforcing a rule that would ensure retirement savers are getting sound financial advice on their retirement savings. (House Labor HHS).
- Block efforts by the National Labor Relations Board to protect workers employed by franchises such as fast-food outlets and in other joint employer work arrangements from exploitation; (House Labor HHS)
- Subject 2015 federal dietary guidelines to new evidentiary standards, and also require disclosure of every scientific study on which the recommendations were based, and 90 days of additional public comment, in an effort to delay their implementation and block the recommendation that Americans eat less meat. (House Agriculture)

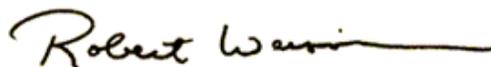
The American public strongly supports public protections and would oppose weakening them. Appropriations bills should not become vehicles for adopting policies that undermine essential safeguards that could not be passed as separate bills.

CSS strongly opposes policy riders on House and Senate appropriations bills whose intent is to thwart important consumer, health, worker and environmental protections and undermine efforts to improve standards on which our basic quality of life and future health rely. We strongly urge you to reject these and all other harmful riders.

Sincerely,



Katherine McFate, President and CEO,
Center for Effective Government
Co-chair, Coalition for Sensible Safeguards



Robert Weissman, President,
Public Citizen
Co-chair, Coalition for Sensible Safeguards

The Coalition for Sensible Safeguards is an alliance of consumer, labor, scientific, research, good government, faith, community, health, environmental, and public interest groups, as well as concerned individuals, joined in the belief that our country's system of regulatory safeguards provides a stable framework that secures our quality of life and paves the way for a sound economy that benefits us all.