there are several dozen GAO “reports” on major rules each year, and reporting on all aspects of rulemaking can improve.

There are several categories of significant rules. A bewildering nomenclature places regulations into categories encompassing such terms as rules, significant rules, major rules, economically significant rules, guidance, and more. For example, an economically significant rule is major, but a major rule is not necessarily economically significant, so there are fewer economically significant rules than major ones. Both economically significant and major rules qualify as significant. Table 10 depicts numbers of each over the past six years as follows (counts fluctuate slightly as discussed; these are captured in various years editions of this report):

Note that some economically significant rule counts are larger than the GAO’s count of major or significant rules in some instances. There may be different explanations, such as follows:

- Calendar and fiscal years do not align
- Rules are not being reported to the GAO but are being noted at OMB
- Independent agency rules appear under different categorizations in various databases
- Budget and transfer rules are reported differently

Legislation or an executive order to systematize nomenclature could help bring greater clarity, reconcile record keeping across various government databases, and subject independent agencies to greater oversight by Congress and the public.

Regarding Table 9’s GAO-based compilation, President Barack Obama issued 691 major rules, compared with President George W. Bush’s 504—both over eight years. (This presentation uses calendar years, so Bush’s eight years contain the final weeks of President Bill Clinton’s presidency, before Bush’s inauguration, and Obama’s first year includes the Bush administration’s final weeks.) President Bush averaged 63 major rules annually during his eight years in office. President Obama averaged 86, a 36 percent higher average annual output than that of Bush. Trump issued an average of almost 69 major rules annually—49 in 2017, 55 in 2018, 80 in 2019, and 90 in 2020—some of which were deregulatory.