

Introduction

by Matthew Adams

“All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.”

Article I, Section 1 of the United States Constitution

According to the Competitive Enterprise Institute’s most recent count, federal regulatory agencies issued 44 rules for every law passed by Congress. This “unconstitutionality index” goes hand in hand with our latest analysis which shows the total cost of federal regulation tops more than \$2 trillion annually. The average US household pays nearly \$16,000 each year in a hidden regulatory tax.

Regulators have overreached and claimed quasi-legislative powers. These powers were rightly vested in Congress and not the executive by Article I of the Constitution. With unelected bureaucrats at the litany of alphabet soup agencies adding so much red tape and causing such burdensome negative economic effects each year, it is painfully obvious that structural, Constitution-minded reforms are needed.

There is also the US national debt, which is just over \$36 trillion and growing fast. It is an understatement to say that the decisions we make collectively as a nation over the next decade will determine the next century of American economic prosperity and strength.

With the recent political trifecta coming out of the November elections, the 119th Congress offers free market and limited government advocates in the legislative branch unique opportunities to implement the necessary reforms. Now is the time to downsize the size and scope of the administrative state and bring about restraint, transparency, and accountability to our regulatory processes.

With all this in mind, it is my pleasure to share with you the 2025 edition of *Free to Prosper: A Pro-Growth Agenda for the 119th Congress*.

First published in 2015 for the 114th Congress, *Free to Prosper* offers legislators a set of concrete policy proposals prepared by CEI experts to help them tackle the pressing issues of today.

It is a compendium of practical, tailored, and actionable ideas to help you, lawmakers and staffers, get things done. Politics is the art of the possible and this is a guidebook for reforms that are doable. It does not include every proposal under the sun. It's not overly ideological or partisan. It does not promise to solve every problem. Rather, it is designed to help you navigate the complexities of governance, the labyrinth of regulation, and ultimately make good on some of those promises made on the campaign trail.

The report gives special attention to structural regulatory reforms and legislation like the Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny (REINS) Act and the Guidance Out of Darkness (GOOD) Act that would take an axe to the regulatory state. It discusses regulation post-*Chevron* deference and advocates for an "Abuse of Crisis Prevention Act" to safeguard against the kind of COVID-era lawmaking which hurt our economy and unleashed a new slew of regulatory mandates. It calls for a restoration of the constitutional principles upon which we were founded and outlines how Congress can reclaim its Article I powers.

Many of the top issues for voters during the 2024 election are here. This booklet addresses inflation, health care, trade, and artificial intelligence. And it goes on to address the many other domestic economic issues in need of attention: energy and environment, banking and finance, labor and employment, technology and telecommunications, antitrust, and much else.

Whether you're a seasoned Capitol Hill legislative director or greenhorn legislative correspondent hot off a campaign, I trust that you'll find *Free to Prosper* helpful to you as you go about the important work of legislating.

The practical, achievable, and timely recommendations found in our agenda for the 119th Congress do not require unanimous support. However, they do demand legislative champions. It is CEI's hope, and my hope, to partner with you over the next year to advance some of these reforms.

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