

## Moratorium on New Regulations is NOT ENOUGH

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Business needs more certainty in its tax and regulatory environment in order to risk capital and invest in new products or employees. Only when businesses and consumers feel secure from unknown tax and regulatory futures will the economy grow again. It has been suggested by some that the state (and feds) should adopt a moratorium on new regulations, with exceptions for defense and public safety, to instill this sense of certainty. I don't disagree with the exceptions, but a moratorium on new regulations is not enough.

Of everything our 1,100 small business members face, regulatory burdens are most crushing – whether they be regulations on permits and approvals, on business operations, or those affecting credit availability.

Yes, we very much want government to stop spending and get its own house in order. We understand the looming financial meltdown for state government and, therefore, all of us. The \$3.5 billion structural deficit for state government in the next fiscal year alone is only about half of what's truly needed. The state needs about \$3 billion more it's to properly capitalize the unfunded pension and health care liabilities. GAAP accounting principles, something both Gubernatorial candidates said they would adopt, forces the state to capitalize those long-term liabilities. So, that's \$6.5 billion to find in next year's budget. Who is talking those numbers? I don't hear it.

But mostly, we're desperate and mad (depending on the day, one emotion takes over the other) about government being on our back so relentlessly. The regulatory envelope has ballooned to such an extent, it's amazing anything at all gets built today. I've been in this business, particularly on the land use and environmental side, for almost 30 years (and lobbying at the state capital for the industry for 20 years), and I don't know how the regulatory environment got so far away from us. It's been mission creep; hens pecking us to death ... a little here, a little there ...; one thing after another; fees inching up year after year, for more and more things; public hearings upon public hearings for everything connected with the use of private land, including as-of-right permit applications (i.e., if you comply with the rules, you're entitled to your permit, so what's the point of a public hearing other than to "let the public vent" as I've been told). Then, there's the occasional insanity as in the EPA lead-paint rule that is a time bomb waiting to go off for remodelers and home owners, or the DEP stream flow regulations that will impose water use restrictions on everyone to solve a stream flow issue affecting fish populations in 1% of our streams, or the multiple stormwater regulations coming from local boards, the state DEP and the federal EPA. WHAT IS THAT ABOUT? Why not one practical, clear, understandable regulation everyone can follow? More government running amok; every regulator asserting their power; Give me a break, please!

It seems like there's been a whole cultural shift over the last few decades that presumes we, as individuals, consumers and businesses, can't possibly survive without reliance on a government agency looking after us, making sure everything is done "right" and everyone is protected, leaving no corner of a business venture unexamined or unregulated. The creativity of regulators' minds is extraordinary. They seemingly know no bounds for pushing out the sphere of their control over others.

We need not only a moratorium on new regulations (which will help set the tone and the stage) but also a significant effort at repeal and reform. Create a litmus test for reasonable protection of the public's health and safety, and of reasonable self-reliance. If a regulation doesn't pass that test, repeal it. Then, break through the silos and bureaucracies and reform what's left so it works, is efficient and timely, with clear rules so everyone knows that if you play by those rules there will be certain results and you'll get there quickly. I don't know if there are any political leaders courageous enough to agree, but if so, we **must** elect them in November, or we will be in even deeper trouble as a state and a country.

I'm not a lunatic. I just want the America I know and love back; I want the ideals of freedom and self reliance ... for which my father fought, marched through Italy, France, Belgium and Germany, and taught me ... back. I want back a spirit of entrepreneurship, liberty, and community vitality that welcomes growth and families and businesses with open arms. I have a reputation (wrongly or rightly deserved is for others to judge) for being pretty level-headed, grounded and steady. But, today I am mad. I hope Nov. 2's aftermath doesn't make more of our members, or me, desperate.

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