

September 19, 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murray and Senator Collins:

The Coalition for Sensible Safeguards (CSS), an alliance of over 180 labor, scientific, research, good government, faith, community, health, environmental, and public interest groups, and the undersigned allied organizations strongly oppose any amendments to the Fiscal Year 2024 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act that include harmful provisions that will thwart necessary rulemaking including Senate Amendments 1121, 1126, 1128, and 1142.

These amendments incorporate many provisions from the House REINS Act of 2023 (H.R. 277), which represents a radical threat to our government's ability to protect the public from harm. The amendment's aim is to halt the implementation of critical safeguards making industry even less accountable to the public. It would do nothing to improve protections for the American public, but instead would benefit only those corporations that wish to game the system and evade standards.

Under these amendments, agencies such as the Veterans Administration, Department of Defense, Department of Transportation, and others within the jurisdiction of the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act could not enforce a "major" rule – a rule with a large economic impact – unless both houses of Congress affirmatively approved it. These agencies' non-controversial rules would be subject to new unnecessary delays and potentially even blocked from being finalized as well. These amendments also, like the REINS Act, includes a burdensome and unnecessary review of existing rules that could undermine such rules if Congress does not take affirmative action to approve such rules.

These amendments would subvert the regular order legislative process and instead incentivize congressional inaction, thwarting the most beneficial public protections by requiring Congress to approve them.

These amendments establish a dangerous precedent: they target a specific body of rules, both past and future, and create convoluted congressional procedures to thwart the implementation of such rules. It is also dangerous and unacceptable to attempt to smuggle in policies this extreme and harmful as obscure amendments to an appropriations bill.

Congress should be searching for ways to ensure that federal agencies such as the Veterans Administration, Department of Defense, and Department of Transportation are able to enforce laws designed to protect Americans, not putting up roadblocks to sensible safeguards.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to oppose Senate Amendments 1121, 1126, 1128, and 1142 to the Fiscal Year 2024 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

Sincerely,

Coalition for Sensible Safeguards

American Association For Justice

American Bird Conservancy

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

American Federation of Teachers

Americans for Financial Reform

Asbestos Disease Awareness Org

Center for Biological Diversity

Center for Progressive Reform

Clean Water Action

Coalition on Human Needs

Consumer Action

Consumer Federation of America

Delaware Community Reinvestment Action Council, Inc.

Earthjustice

Environmental Defense Action Fund

Government Information Watch

Impact Fund

League of Conservation Voters

National Employment Law Project

Oceana

Project On Government Oversight

Public Citizen

Public Justice Center

United Steelworkers (USW)

URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity
Voices for Progress

CC: Members of the Senate