

We regularly hear about President Trump's latest "rollbacks" to regulations, the primary excuse being that regulations, particularly Obama ones, "overreached." The real reason, it appears, is that President Trump cannot bear comparisons between Obama's presidency and his. But he sometimes has other motives. As Nancy Pelosi warned, "in the Trump White House, all roads lead to Putin."

Early in Trump's presidency, I recall his amazing comment about asbestos, and his scorn for regulations protecting the public from this poisonous material. Trump claimed that had the World Trade Center continued to use asbestos in its construction (it stopped midway), the buildings would not have fallen on 9-11. Of course, this is nonsense. In addition, four years after the towers fell, spewing 400 tons of asbestos into the air, it still imperils the workers who cleaned up at Ground Zero. Malignant mesothelioma is a dreadful way to die.

Is Trump's fondness for asbestos just a reflection of his promotion of junk science, or is there another motive? The US no longer mines or manufactures asbestos. Brazil was once the source of most all imported asbestos, according to the EPA, but they banned its manufacture and sale. Russia is now the supplier. Putin's sly humor is apparent in the picture on Russian asbestos containers: a smiling Donald Trump.

The New York Times has listed 95 environmental rules being rolled back under Trump (Dec.21, 2019). "President Trump has made eliminating federal regulations a priority. His administration, with help from Republicans in Congress, has often targeted environmental rules it sees as burdensome to the fossil fuel industry and other big businesses."

The Brookings Institute (a respected think tank) has categorized all the rollbacks, and they run the range of health, transportation, environmental, labor, agriculture, education, financial, housing, immigration, and "other." There are several hundred such deregulations attempted here, the majority environmental, followed by transportation. Some of the more shocking deregulations have to do with accidental chemical release prevention, occupational exposure to Beryllium, clean air and water regulations, methane rules, rail transportation of hazardous materials, reversing ban on pesticide chlopyrifos, and endangered species act.

Each of these rollbacks seeks to remove rights or protections provided by the regulations. CNBC lists the five worst rollbacks of 2019: rolling back methane leaks; repealing the Obama--era clean water rule; weakening the Endangered Species Act; weakening climate plans to help coal plants operate longer; and loosening Obama-era rules restricting auto pollution.

The good news is that the Trump cult does not always get its way. Law suits are in process and the courts prevent some of the most egregious from unrolling.

Two of the very latest attempts are particularly obnoxious. The first is the Agriculture Department's attempt to roll back the school lunch program promoted by Michelle Obama, using more fruit and vegetables and healthy grains in an attempt to address the worrying obesity numbers in school children. The new rollback proposes to return the lunch foods so enjoyed before: pizza and hamburgers "because children like them." Besides, they are cheaper to provide than fruits and vegetables.

Another rollback is now before the Supreme Court. Trump wants to allow more employers to deny insurance coverage for contraceptives to women. His administration does not reject insurance coverage for Viagra, but could it be that birth control permits women too much autonomy? And could it be that Trump owes his cult status to conservative religious supporters still at war with women? Obama compromised with religious organizations who objected to contraception, but Trump wants to give any employer an out from benefitting their female employees.

When a new Congress, and hopefully new President, take over the next government, there should be hearings on regulations and deregulations. Those regulations put in place by presidents who were not able to get them passed as laws should be the first to be reviewed. Obama was thwarted by Mitch McConnell and the Republican majority from putting them into law. Trump is attempting to reverse all these regulations. We must save them by giving them the protection of law. Envy and spite are not sterling presidential values, Mr. Trump.

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