A Roadmap for Regulatory Reform

Proven tools, emerging trends, and model policies to cut red tape and restore accountability in state governments.

Across the country, millions of regulations and restrictions are holding back innovation, entrepreneurship, and prosperity. Americans for Prosperity believes peeling back these rules, and adding oversight where it is missing, is an essential step toward reigniting the American Dream. States have many options. We sorted them into three tiers based on track record and potential impact.

NEW IN 2026

Tennessee and South Carolina enacted full REINS laws, and Oklahoma became the first state to require state and federal guidance transparency.

TIER 1 High-Impact Reforms

10 STATES
REINS Act

Laws that require the legislature to approve major regulations, so costly rules get democratic oversight. Five more states have REINS-style processes.

2026 UPDATE
Tennessee and South Carolina enacted full REINS laws. South Dakota enacted a partial one.

16 STATES + 1 BALLOT MEASURE
End Judicial Deference

Courts review agency readings of the law for themselves, which restores judicial independence and fairness in regulatory disputes.

2026 UPDATE
Kansas, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina all enacted laws.

6 STATES
Regulatory Sunset Laws

Regular review and automatic expiration of rules, which clears out outdated or duplicate ones. Sixteen more states have limited sunsets, usually for boards and commissions.

Texas: 42 agencies eliminated, $1 billion+ saved since 1977.

TIER 2 Emerging Opportunities

Guidance Document Transparency

Eight states require agencies to disclose some guidance documents. AFP's model policy calls for one indexed, online portal for state and federal directives.

2026 UPDATE
Oklahoma's Guidance Transparency Act is the first law to require both.

Ongoing Guidance Review

States should regularly review agency guidance documents so outdated or obsolete guidance does not pile up.

Office of Regulatory Management

A central office to oversee rulemaking, improve regulatory quality, and build accountability and transparency into the process.

TIER 3 Targeted Reforms

Regulatory Sandboxes

Eighteen states have tried universal or industry-specific sandboxes that temporarily waive rules to foster innovation.

Regulatory Budgeting

Four states cap or offset regulatory burdens, such as cutting three rules for every new one.

Red Tape Reduction Programs

Seven states have goal-based efforts, often by executive order, to cut discretionary rules by about 25%.

Agencies Pay Attorney's Fees

When a citizen wins against an agency that overstepped or acted in bad faith.

Explicit Rulemaking Authority

No binding rules from vague statutes. The legislature must grant clear authority.

No Stricter Than Federal

State rules cannot exceed federal standards unless strict conditions are met.

Standing Committee Oversight

Strong legislative committees to review and approve agency rules.

Read the full report

Model legislation, success stories, and resources for reform-minded policymakers. Scan the code or visit americansforprosperity.org/policy-corner/reg-reform.

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