

**Statement Of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,
Subcommittee Hearing, “Justice Delayed: The Human Cost of Regulatory Paralysis”
August 1, 2013**

Today’s hearing focuses on the problems that can result from delays in agency decision-making. Too often, regulations that would benefit consumers and protect investors are being delayed before implementation, postponing the benefits of those rules and creating uncertainty for the consumers and businesses that will be affected by them. I thank Senator Blumenthal for addressing this important issue at the first hearing of the Subcommittee on Oversight, Federal Rights, and Agency Action.

Regulations play an important role in protecting American workers and consumers. We all benefit from products that have been tested to meet strong health and safety standards. Workplace safety rules ensure that American workers are not put in danger simply by showing up for work. Regulations protect our air and water supply from contamination, protect investors from deceptive financial products, and help ensure that the toys we give our children are safe. Effective regulation can help level the playing field and guarantee a minimum level of protection that benefits us all.

In recent years, many have talked about the burdens created by federal regulations. I agree that we must seek a balance so that regulations are fair and tailored to achieve the public protections and benefits for which they are designed. No one wants to see businesses needlessly overburdened or caught between duplicative or confusing rules. But as we discuss effective rulemaking, we should not lose sight of the important policy and consumer interests that regulations can help protect.

We must also ensure that the process through which rules are promulgated remains efficient and enables agencies to fulfill their mandates. When an agency is delayed for years in implementing a statute passed by Congress because of political and procedural hurdles, it undermines Congressional intent and prevents the agency from serving the public interest for which it was created. Unfortunately, the delays in rulemaking have parallels in the Senate’s recent disputes over confirming executive nominees, such as the needless holdup that forced the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to work for over two years without a confirmed director. These delays come at the expense of American workers and consumers.

I thank Senator Blumenthal for highlighting this important issue today. I welcome the witnesses and look forward to their testimony.

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