



Insight

Obama's Last Budget: A Look at Remaining Regulatory Priorities

DAN GOLDBECK | FEBRUARY 9, 2016

Today, the White House released its [budget proposal](#) for Fiscal Year 2017. It is the final budget for this administration entering a lame duck year.

The budget reveals some of the administration's regulatory plans. Curiously, the funding requests for the usual major regulatory priorities (Affordable Care Act, Dodd-Frank, and EPA) seem remarkably similar to last year's budget proposal. The most interesting new funding requests largely center on labor regulations.

Looking at the major regulatory priorities, it seems the administration is looking to cement its already extensive legacy. The only notable thematic request is a call to double funding for SEC and CFTC by 2021. Despite the request to eventually double the funding for SEC and CFTC, this year's budget appears to be copy-and-pasted text from last year's proposal:

| Regulatory Program | FY 2016 Request | FY 2017 Request |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Affordable Care Act | "The Budget fully funds the ongoing implementation of ACA's health insurance coverage improvements through the operation of Health Insurance Marketplaces and the premium tax credits and cost sharing assistance to help make coverage affordable, drive down long-term health care costs, and improve care for millions of citizens." | "The Budget fully funds the ongoing implementation of the ACA and makes a number of improvements to the health care system." |
| Dodd-Frank | "The Budget continues to support Wall Street Reform implementation across agencies, including \$1.7 billion for the Securities and Exchange Commission and \$322 million for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), representing increases over the 2015 enacted level of 15 percent and 29 percent, respectively." | "The Budget's 2017 down payment toward the five-year doubling target includes \$1.8 billion for the SEC and \$330 million for the CFTC." |
| EPA Climate Plan | "The Budget includes \$239 million to support EPA efforts to address climate change through commonsense standards, guidelines, and voluntary programs, including \$25 million to help States develop their Clean Power Plan strategies." | "The FY 2017 Budget prioritizes climate action by providing \$235 million to support EPA efforts to address climate change through commonsense standards, guidelines and voluntary programs." |

Other notable regulatory requests include:

- **Labor Regulations:** The budget proposal calls for "\$1.9 billion in discretionary resources to ensure that DOL's worker protection agencies can meet their responsibilities to defend the health, safety, wages, working conditions, and retirement security of American workers." Of that, it dedicates \$277 million towards minimum wage enforcement and "almost \$1 billion for the Occupational and Mine Safety and Health Administrations (OSHA and MSHA)."
- **Food Safety:** "The Budget includes \$1.6 billion, an increase of \$212 million above FY 2016, to support FDA and CDC activities that will develop and strengthen an integrated and prevention-based food safety

system. The FY 2017 Budget includes \$1.5 billion for FDA to support implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act, including increasing state capacity to implement the produce safety rules, implementing the Foreign Supplier Verification Program, and ensuring consumers are able to make healthy food choices.”

- **Transportation Safety:** “Integrating surface transportation technologies safely into the transportation system with \$400 million per year in investment...the FY 2017 Budget requests \$295 million for PHMSA, including more than \$176 million for pipeline safety and more than \$68 million to sustain essential safe and efficient movement of hazardous materials across the country and respond to emerging threats...The Budget requests \$213 million to support FRA’s rail safety and development programs, an increase of \$14 million from FY 2016 enacted. Funding will support railroads’ implementation and enforcement of PTC, in addition to track and bridge safety activities.”

This final budget proposal, like so many others, seems to just appeal to progressives. Yet, one can still draw some implications from it: billions in government outlays to fund the formation of rules that will impose billions in costs.