

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

WILLIAM L. KOVACS
VICE PRESIDENT
ENVIRONMENT, TECHNOLOGY &
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March 14, 2003

Honorable John D. Graham
Administrator, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget
Room 262
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Dr. Graham:

As you know, the Office of Management and Budget published its Draft 2003 Report to Congress on the Costs and Benefits of Federal Regulations (Draft Report) on February 3, 2003. Included with the Draft Report was OMB's Draft Guidelines for the Conduct of Regulatory Analysis and the Format of Accounting Statements (Draft Guidelines). Pursuant to the schedule set forth in the Draft Report, comments on both the Draft Report and the Draft Guidelines are due by April 3, 2003. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is writing at this time to respectfully request that OMB de-couple the Draft Report and the Draft Guidelines, and that the deadline for comments in response to the Draft Guidelines – and only the Draft Guidelines – be extended by at least 30 days, or until no sooner than May 3, 2003.

The Chamber is appreciative of the Congressionally-mandated time constraints that have been placed on OMB with regard to the Draft Report. We therefore do not seek any action that would prevent timely completion of the final version of the 2003 report. However, the Draft Guidelines are an OIRA-initiated project that does not face these same time limitations. While we applaud your decision to include the new guidelines as one of your "recommendations for reform" as called for by the Regulatory Right-to-Know Act, we strongly believe that comments you receive in response to your Draft Guidelines will be substantially improved if interested parties are given additional time to respond.

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A tremendous amount of interest exists in the business community relating to the Draft Guidelines, and it appears that a similar level of interest exists within environmental and public interest communities. This level of interest is matched, however, by the complexity of the issues presented in the proposal. The Draft Guidelines raise complex issues in the areas of statistics, science, policy and law. Therefore, many organizations – including the Chamber – must rely upon a number of separate experts to assist in the development of their comments. Between the intricacy of the issues and the need to coordinate information from a large number of disciplines, the original 60-day comment period appears to be inadequate.

The regulatory analysis process proposed by OMB, if implemented and followed, will result in a substantial change in the manner in which federal agencies develop policies and regulations. While the Chamber generally welcomes such improvements, the sizable import of the Draft Guidelines strongly suggest that OMB should seek to obtain the most informed opinions possible from stakeholders and other interested parties. In our view, such opinions will be best obtained if a minimum of 30 additional days are provided for the development and submission of comments.

On behalf of the three million businesses represented by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, we appreciate your consideration of this request. If you wish to further discuss this matter, I would be pleased to speak with you at any time. Regardless of your response to this request, the Chamber looks forward to working further with the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs as you develop final guidelines governing the conduct of regulatory analysis by federal agencies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "William L. Kovacs".

William L. Kovacs