

Congressman Rice

America used to be a “can do” country, but over the years we’ve become a “you can’t do that” country. We used to encourage growth, investment, and development that helped to make America the country it is today. But over the years we’ve been tying our own hands with red tape and failing to act on needed reforms.

Under the Obama Administration alone, an unprecedented number of federal regulations were implemented. Just last year the Federal Register, which keeps track of government regulations, was 97,110 pages. For every new law, 18 regulations were enacted. These regulations cost each American \$2,496 per year, four times higher than the average annual household heating bill.

From 2010 to the first three quarters of 2016, economic growth averaged a disappointing 2.1 percent, slower than the historical average. In fact, President Obama was the first president in modern history not to have a single year of growth over three percent.

With these sobering facts, it’s no wonder two-thirds of Americans believe their kids will have less opportunity than they’ve had. I want the best possible future for our kids and grandkids and believe the way we get there is through making America as competitive as possible. This has been and will always be my sole focus in Congress, and I’m proposing solutions and working on policy that will help America restore its competitive edge in the world.

Republicans in Congress have already voted to roll back handfuls of last-minute, onerous Obama regulations through a process called the Congressional Review Act. We’ve been working on this since the start of the New Year because these regulations are choking our economy and holding us back. Eight of these have been signed into law by President Trump, including laws to roll back the job-crushing regulations on the oil and gas industry as well as efforts to overturn the federal government takeover of land management and education and return that power back to the states.

I’m also working on bills that would help make America competitive, starting at the local and state level. All across my Congressional district, just as many areas of South Carolina and the entire Southeast, having sound infrastructure is essential. But the way things currently stand, it’s too easy for special interest environmental groups to hold up infrastructure projects. In my hometown of Myrtle Beach, fringe environmentalist groups delayed construction of key highway extensions and road improvements, costing taxpayers millions in additional construction bills and hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs. These groups are easily able to file frivolous lawsuits to delay badly-needed construction projects and their actions, mixed with government red tape and bureaucratic review, are a toxic combination.

I've proposed a bill that would cut government red tape that results in delays and discourage the filing of frivolous lawsuits against construction permits by requiring the loser of the lawsuit to pay for the legal costs. I am an environmentalist and grew up in the outdoors, but there has to be a sense of reasonableness so that these much-needed projects can be completed in a timely manner with the lowest cost possible. Infrastructure investment encourages business and economic development and creates jobs that benefit local areas as well as our entire country.

Another area of concern is our current tax code. I was a CPA and tax lawyer for 25 years before being elected to Congress and I saw firsthand the problems that exist because of our broken and complex tax code. Since I got to Washington I've been a staunch supporter of tax reform because if we can fix this one major issue, it will significantly help to restore American competitiveness.

I currently serve on the House Ways and Means Committee, the oldest committee in Congress with sole jurisdiction over taxes, and as a member I've had a seat at the table in reforming our tax code. Tax reform hasn't been done since 1986, and back then America was on a path of economic prosperity. The problem is, that was 30 years ago and other countries have passed us by. There's nothing wrong with that, but America hasn't done the same and we are hurting because of it.

This is a big goal, but the Ways and Means Committee has been hard at work crafting legislation to reform our tax code to make it simpler, fairer, and more competitive. While this won't be an easy task, it is absolutely essential if we want to see economic growth closer to three or four percent instead of recent trends of one and two percent. We'll also stop seeing American jobs and businesses leaving our shores and we will see increased growth and a brighter future.

American workers and businesses are the best of the best and I believe can compete with anyone if Washington would give them the tools they need to succeed. It's time to implement real reforms, restore our competitive edge and get America back to its "can-do" roots.