



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on August 12, 2014

Lawmakers Working to Demilitarize Federal Bureaucracies

Americans across the political spectrum are becoming increasingly outraged by the [swarms of heavily armed federal bureaucracies](#), many with SWAT teams and military weapons, breaking down doors and terrorizing citizens to enforce unconstitutional regulations on everything from food and drugs to the environment and education. In response, a group of GOP lawmakers in Congress announced that they are working to at least demilitarize the perpetually expanding army of regulatory bureaucrats. Supporters of the effort said it would be a good start in reining in Leviathan.



The legislation, dubbed the [“Regulatory Agency Demilitarization” \(RAD\) Act](#), was introduced by Rep. Chris Stewart (shown, R-Utah) ([Freedom Index: 56](#)). If approved, it would prohibit a broad array of federal agencies from purchasing and using guns and SWAT teams to enforce regulations. The only agencies that would be exempt are those with traditional military or law enforcement functions — the departments of Defense, Justice, Homeland Security, along with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the U.S. Capitol Police, and a handful of others.

Like other Americans — and especially the victims of federal abuses — Rep. Stewart has become alarmed at the explosive growth of paramilitary bureaucracies. “It’s disturbing to see the stories of federal regulators armed to the teeth and breaking into homes and businesses when there was no reason to think there would be resistance,” Rep. Stewart said in a statement. “I understand that federal agents must be capable of protecting themselves. But what we have observed goes far beyond providing necessary protection.”

If passed, the bill, H.R. 4934, would repeal the firearm and arrest authority that supporters of the measure argue were “arbitrarily” granted to dozens of federal agencies in the 2002 Homeland Security Act. That means no more machine guns, grenades, masks, warrior costumes, and other military weaponry for regulators to be used against Americans. The legislation would also direct the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to detail all of the federal agencies with units that receive special tactical or military-style training and respond to situations that fall outside the capabilities of regular law enforcement.

Among the myriad, already militarized bureaucracies that would be affected by the ban on militarization: the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Education (ED), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Park Service (NPS), the Fish and Wildlife Service (FSW), the Department of Agriculture (USDA), and more.



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“When there are genuinely dangerous situations involving federal law, that’s the job of the Department of Justice, not regulatory agencies like the FDA or the Department of Education,” said Rep. Stewart, who introduced the RAD Act. “Not only is it overkill, but having these highly armed units within dozens of agencies is duplicative, costly, heavy handed, dangerous and destroys any sense of trust between citizens and the federal government.”

Rep. Stewart also argued that the increasingly out-of-control weaponization of the bureaucracy is merely a part of a broader problem. “The militarization of agencies is only a symptom of a much deeper and more troubling problem within Washington — that the federal government no longer trusts the American people,” he continued. “When all of us feel that we are no longer seen as citizens but as potential dangerous suspects — a relationship of trust is impossible. I’m working to restore and rebuild trust — beginning with this effort to defund paramilitary capabilities within federal regulatory agencies.”

Indeed, recent surveys show more than two thirds of Americans now [believe the federal government is “out of control” and a “threat” to their basic liberties](#). Trust in the federal government, meanwhile, is at an all-time low and still dropping. If current trends continue, there can be little doubt that very soon, the feds will no longer be able to plausibly claim to have the “consent of the governed.”

Among the original co-sponsors of the bill are Rep. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.), Rep. Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.), Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.), Rep. Tom McClintock (R-Calif.), Rep. Mike Pompeo (R-Kan.), Rep. Jeff Duncan (R-S.C.), Rep. Kerry Bentivolio (R-Mich.), Rep. Todd Rokita (R-Ind.), Rep. Billy Long (R-Mo.), Rep. Doug LaMalfa (R-Calif.), Rep. Adrian Smith (R-Neb.), Rep. James Lankford (R-Okla.), Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-Texas), Rep. Matt Salmon (R-Ariz.), Rep. Tom Rice (R-S.C.) and Rep. Mark Amodei (R-Nev.). Introduced in late June with little fanfare, the legislation now has more than 30 co-sponsors.

According to lawmakers backing the bill, they will resume work on it once the ongoing recess comes to an end. It was not immediately clear whether Democrats, most of whom traditionally claimed to support civil liberties, would support the effort to rein in militarized federal bureaucrats. However, Rep. Stewart believes some will eventually join his effort, citing the difficulty in defending the use of SWAT teams to enforce the perpetually expanding avalanche of arcane regulations and decrees cooked up by federal bureaucrats. [The Obama administration alone has added well over 10,000 pages of new “regulations.”](#) For now, the bill has been referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

In announcing the effort, Rep. Stewart pointed to several well-publicized instances of militarized regulatory abuses plaguing the American people. In July 2010, for example, a “multi-agency taskforce” that included [armed FDA agents raided an organic grocery store suspected of having raw milk](#) — yes, raw milk. “This is about control and profit, not our health,” Rawesome Foods co-founder Aajonus Vonderplanitz, the target of the raid, told the *Los Angeles Times*. “How can we not have the freedom to choose what we eat?”

The next year, heavily armed stormtroopers with the Department of Education — the unconstitutional bureaucracy that is [seeking to nationalize government schools](#) — literally busted down a person’s door. The suspect was alleged to have been involved in “student-aid fraud.” In July of 2013, another militarized “multi-agency taskforce” that included armed bureaucrats from the EPA, the BLM, the NPS, and the FWS, raided a small mining operation in Alaska for a suspected violation of the Clean Water Act. Just this summer, meanwhile, the USDA published a solicitation for submachine guns. There are countless other examples of paramilitary bureaucratic abuses, too, many of them documented in *The New American* magazine.



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Of course, stopping federal bureaucrats from playing war — with the American people as the enemy — will hardly solve all of the abuses those bureaucracies perpetrate against citizens and the U.S. Constitution. The problems have been brewing for decades and will not be easy to solve all at once, though defunding the agencies in the House is certainly a viable tactic. Still, the bill could represent an excellent first step toward reining in a government that appears to acknowledge no limits to its power. After that, Americans can work to abolish the out-of-control outfits altogether, or, if they are truly needed, amend the Constitution to authorize their existence.

Photo of Rep. Chris Stewart (R-Utah): AP Images

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