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A trade group that represents large U.S. companies delivered to the White House on Wednesday a letter outlining the regulations that executives say represent their top targets for repeal or modification in the Trump administration.

The letter from the Business Roundtable was sent in advance of a meeting set for Thursday with President Donald Trump and his advisory council of manufacturing executives, which includes more than a dozen members of the Business Roundtable, including Dow Chemical Co. Chief Executive Andrew Liveris and Lockheed Martin Chief Executive Marillyn Hewson.

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Mr. Trump has made rolling back regulations a priority and has already directed the Treasury Department to undertake a broad review of financial rules. Business executives and top administration leaders have said rolling back and modifying regulations will boost economic growth. The Trump administration has provided “not just an open door, but real encouragement” in acknowledging concerns raised by

business leaders over regulatory issues, said Business Roundtable President Joshua Bolten. “We like what we’re seeing so far,” said Mark Costa, chief executive of Eastman Chemical Co., who drafted the trade group’s letter.

The group identified more than a dozen major regulations it said should be revamped or scrapped across labor, health, finance and the environment. Targets include provisions issued by the Treasury last fall to keep businesses

from using intercompany debt to avoid U.S. taxes and by the Labor Department to require employers to pay overtime to more salaried workers.

The business executives are also targeting the government’s net-neutrality rules, a priority of cable and telephone companies, and a suite of environmental regulations governing carbon-dioxide emissions and federal regulation of waterways. The group also recommended the Trump administration expand an existing executive order that requires cost-benefit analyses on major regulations issued by executive-branch cabinet-level agencies to cover rules issued by independent regulatory agencies.

While businesses remain optimistic about the rollback of regulations under the Trump administration, they are much warier about the White House's push to curb immigration and trade. In Wednesday's letter, Mr. Costa said the group stands ready to prevent "unintended consequences" from such curbs, which "would inhibit the ability for U.S. companies to drive economic growth and be globally competitive." – ***Wall Street Journal***

The Trump administration has trashed a report touting the successes of the federal E-Rate program that is putting nearly \$4 billion a year into equalizing schools' access to the internet. And that's making educators nervous — particularly in schools with high percentages of low-income students like the Kansas City, Mo., and Kansas City, Kan., school districts that get the lion's share of the area's E-Rate dollars.

"We can't go backward," said Joe Fives, the director of technology and information services for the Kansas City, Kan., School District. The district has relied heavily on the **E-Rate program** since its inception in the Clinton administration to support millions of dollars worth in bandwidth and connectivity hardware. "We're light years ahead of where we were," he said.

Schools are wary because the Federal Communications Commission earlier this month **put out an order** rescinding a **report on E-Rate** that had been filed by the FCC in the final days of the Obama administration. The new FCC chairman — appointed by President Donald Trump within days of his inauguration — is Kansas native Ajit Pai, who had served as a commissioner at the FCC under President Barack Obama.

The voided report particularly recounted successes in an effort to modernize the E-Rate program beginning in 2014 by focusing on expanding internet access dollars into homes and locations outside of schools. The effort means to help low-income children continue educational access during homework hours. The modernization effort, forwarded by former chairman Tom Wheeler, boosted the FCC's annual spending cap from \$2.4 billion to \$3.9 billion. The future of the expanded E-Rate program is unclear.

A spokesman for the commission said in Education Week magazine that the commission voided the report because it "does not reflect the official views of the agency." The commission could not comment on the report's findings or conclusions, the spokesman said, because the report "failed to follow proper procedures."

It is unusual to rescind a report, but the significance of the FCC's action will depend on the policy actions Pai advocates in the days to come, said Blair Levin, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and the former FCC chief of staff under President Bill Clinton. Many FCC rules and orders enacted in Obama's last month were also undone.

Pai, in statements made upon his appointment and on the commission's web site, says that closing the digital divide is one of the agency's prime missions, promising a "comprehensive plan to promote broadband deployment to all Americans." But his actions toward E-Rate, as a commissioner of the FCC and now as chairman, seem at odds with that mission in public schools, said Phillip Lovell, vice president for policy development and government relations at the Alliance for Excellent Education in Washington, D.C. "He's fundamentally laying the groundwork to rescind policy that really advanced the ball for next-generation learning," Lovell said.

The Kansas City, Kan., School District was one of the first in the region to invest in school-issued laptop computers for all of its high school students in the mid-2000s. The Kansas City, Mo., School District and many others in the area have since done the same. E-Rate doesn't fund the computers or other end-uses of technology, but supports the costly infrastructure needed to make school and library internet services work effectively — such as increasing bandwidth. Many studies have touted positive

impacts of the program, although the Justice Department has prosecuted companies and school officials for abuse or waste in the program in several instances over its history⁵

The FCC's rescinding of rules, orders and reports under Pai reflect a changing political landscape for the FCC, Levin said. E-Rate was funded by Congress with bipartisan support, Levin said. The FCC overall tended toward a more bipartisan atmosphere through the Clinton and Bush administrations. The past transitions in leadership also happened "in a bipartisan way," he said. "But historical factors have made the shift more dramatic." – *Kansas City Star*

Can the number of times you flush your toilet and turn on your lights determine if you are eligible to be on the ballot for a state House district? Why, yes, Commonwealth Court Judge Anne E. Covey ruled Thursday, it sure can.

Covey booted from the ballot [Frederick Ramirez](#), the Democratic nominee in the March 21 special election for the 197th District. That came two weeks after Covey held a hearing on a challenge brought by four voters — two Democrats, two Republicans — in the North Philadelphia district who claimed the low levels of water and electricity usage at Ramirez's home showed he didn't really live there.

While Democratic voters were needed to challenge a Democratic candidate, this was really an efficient legal hit by the GOP. Linda Kerns, the Republican City Committee's associate general counsel, filed the challenge and was assisted by Annie Harvey, the local party's deputy director. Customer service supervisors from the Water Department and Peco testified in the hearing that they could not discern from the levels of usage whether the home was regularly occupied, as Ramirez claimed.

But Covey was convinced Ramirez didn't really live there, noting that he testified he keeps an apartment in Andorra, sometimes sleeps at his girlfriend's home in Bristol, and takes long trips to Florida and Puerto Rico. And the "leave a light on in the window" trick didn't seem to sway the judge. Covey wrote in her 50-page ruling that Ramirez's "continuously leaving a bedroom light burning" at his home in the district "was to create the appearance that he resided within."

Ramirez on Thursday accused Covey, a Republican, of acting on partisanship, not precedent, in her ruling. "I can't believe this," he said. "This is a political decision. This is not a legal decision."

The Pennsylvania Department of State's calendar for the special election set Tuesday as the "last day to certify names and residences of all candidates." So that deadline has passed. U.S. Rep. Bob Brady, chairman of the Democratic City Committee, said an appeal to the state Supreme Court is possible. Or the party could go to court to request a replacement candidate. Or it could run a write-in candidate. Or, Brady said, "if everything fails," a Republican will hold the seat until 2019.

That would be a remarkable pickup for the Republicans in a district where the voter registration is 85 percent Democratic, 5 percent Republican, and 10 percent independent or smaller political parties. Lucinda Little, the Republican nominee, is currently the only candidate on the ballot. Green Party nominee Cheri Honkala was not listed on the ballot because her party missed the deadline to file nomination papers. On Feb. 15, another Commonwealth Court judge rejected Honkala's request to be listed on that ballot. That ruling was appealed last week to the state Supreme Court. Honkala is vowing to run a write-in campaign if she does not get on the ballot.

The 197th District seat is vacant because former State Rep. Leslie Acosta, a Democrat, resigned Jan. 3 after pleading guilty to a felony embezzlement charge in federal court last March.

Hey, here is some nice news from the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, which is accepting applications from high school and college students for its **annual scholarship program**. The PLBC plans to award at least 10 scholarships of \$1,000 each.

Applicants must have at least a 2.5 grade-point average and write two 250-word essays: one on their academic plans and career goals, and another “on why you admire your state representative.” Wait. What?

State Rep. Jordan Harris, who represents parts of South and West Philadelphia, was elected chairman of the PLBC in November. The how-I-admire-you essay “had been included in the scholarship application in previous years. It was not inserted by myself or the current leadership of the caucus,” Harris said. A staff member issued the information this week without his approval, Harris added.

That essay won’t be used to evaluate this year’s applications and it will be eliminated next year, Harris said. For more information about the scholarship, call 717-772-6955.

– *Philadelphia Daily News*



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