

**COMMENTS OF THE STATES OF CALIFORNIA, CONNECTICUT, ILLINOIS,
MINNESOTA, OREGON, VERMONT, AND WASHINGTON; THE
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS; AND THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

March 13, 2025

Comments submitted *via* regulations.gov

Ms. Julia Hegarty
U.S. Department of Energy
Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy
Building Technologies Office, EE-5B
1000 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20585

**RE: Docket No. EERE-2017-BT-STD-009
RIN 1904-AD79
“Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Walk-In Coolers and Walk-In Freezers,” 90 Fed. Reg. 9,951 (Feb. 20, 2025).**

The undersigned states (“States”) respectfully submit this comment on the U.S. Department of Energy’s (“DOE’s”) action purporting to delay the effective date of the energy conservation standards for walk-in coolers and walk-in freezers, 89 Fed. Reg. 104,616 (Dec. 23, 2024) (the “Final Rule”). On February 20, 2025, DOE issued a subsequent rule purporting to delay the effective date of the Final Rule to March 21, 2025, and requested comment on the impacts of this delay, and on potential further delays of the effective date of the Final Rule, as well as the legal, factual, or policy issues raised by the Final Rule. 90 Fed. Reg. 9,951 (Feb. 20, 2025) (the “Delay Rule”).

The States oppose any attempt to delay or weaken the Final Rule. The States have a strong interest in reducing the economic and environmental costs of energy use, and support DOE’s adoption of product standards for walk-in coolers and walk-in freezers because such standards are both technically feasible and economically justified. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 6313(a)(6). The Energy Policy and Conservation Act’s (“EPCA’s”) anti-backsliding provision prohibits DOE from prescribing any amended standard that either increases the maximum allowable energy use or decreases the minimum required energy efficiency of a covered product. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 6295(o)(1). The provision prohibits DOE from weakening or delaying efficiency standards once they are published in the Federal Register. *NRDC v. Abraham*, 355 F.3d 179, 197 (2d Cir. 2004).

Even if EPCA did not bar DOE from delaying standards after issuing them, the Delay Rule is invalid. First, DOE points to no legal authority for the Delay Rule, instead citing only a Presidential Memorandum announcing a “Regulatory Freeze Pending Review,” an unlawful edict that conflicts with EPCA. It is well settled that the President does not have the authority to overrule a congressional statute. *See, e.g., Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co. v. Sawyer*, 343 U.S. 579, 587 (1952) (“[T]he Constitution is neither silent nor equivocal about who shall make laws

which the President is to execute.”). Second, DOE’s assertion that the notice “is exempt from notice and comment because it constitutes a rule of procedure under [5 U.S.C. § 553(b)(A)],” 90 Fed. Reg. at 9,951, is incorrect and ignores that the Delay Rule directly affects the substantive rights of the regulated community. Courts have defined agency procedural rules as the “technical regulation of the form of agency action and proceedings . . . which merely prescribes order and formality in the transaction of . . . business.” *Pickus v. U.S. Bd. of Parole*, 507 F.2d 1107, 1113-14 (D.C. Cir. 1974). The exception excludes any action which, like the Delay Rule, “is likely to have considerable impact on ultimate agency decisions” or that “substantially affects the rights of those over whom the agency exercises authority.” *Id.* at 1114. The Delay Rule does not qualify as a rule of procedure because it is not a process rule for conducting DOE business. It is instead a substantive rulemaking altering the effective date of industry-wide regulation that will substantially affect the rights of the regulated community; thus, the Delay Rule is subject to notice and comment. *See, e.g., Clean Air Council v. Pruitt*, 862 F.3d 1, 6 (D.C. Cir. 2017) (an agency order “delaying [a] rule’s effective date . . . [is] tantamount to amending or revoking a rule[,]” which must go through notice and comment).

Finally, no legal, factual, or policy issues raised by the Final Rule justify delaying its effective date. The standards adopted in the Final Rule align with recommendations submitted jointly by a coalition of refrigeration equipment manufacturers, consumer advocates, and other interested parties. The standards realize significant energy savings and are projected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 29 million metric tons, translating to savings of up to \$6.5 billion for consumers over thirty years. *See* 89 Fed. Reg. at 104,621-22 (2024). DOE’s delay of the effective date and preview of a further delay will encourage manufacturers to forego or delay investments needed to comply with the lawful updated standards in the Final Rule that by its terms became effective on March 11, 2025.

For the foregoing reasons, the undersigned States urge DOE to comply with its statutory obligation to keep federal energy conservation standards up to date and cease its unlawful efforts to delay or further delay the effective date of standards for walk-in coolers and walk-in freezers.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

FOR THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

ROB BONTA
Attorney General of California

/s/ Jamie Jefferson
JAMIE JEFFERSON
JINA J. KIM
TAYLOR WETZEL
Deputy Attorneys General
ROB SWANSON
Acting Supervising Deputy Attorney
General
Office of the Attorney General
1515 Clay Street, 20th Floor
Oakland, California 94610
Email: Jamie.Jefferson@doj.ca.gov

FOR THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

WILLIAM TONG
Attorney General of Connecticut

/s/ Daniel M. Salton
DANIEL M. SALTON
Assistant Attorney General
MATTHEW I. LEVINE
Deputy Associate Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General of
Connecticut
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
Email: daniel.salton@ct.gov

FOR THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

KWAME RAOUL
Attorney General

/s/ Jason E. James
JASON E. JAMES
Assistant Attorney General
MATTHEW J. DUNN
Chief, Environmental Enforcement/
Asbestos Litigation Division
Office of the Attorney General
201 W. Pointe Drive, Suite 7
Belleville, IL 62226
Telephone: (217) 843-0322
Email: jason.james@ilag.gov

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF
MASSACHUSETTS

ANDREA JOY CAMPBELL
Attorney General

/s/ I. Andrew Goldberg
I. ANDREW GOLDBERG
Assistant Attorney General
Environmental Protection Division
Office of the Attorney General
One Ashburton Place, 18th Floor
Boston, MA 02108
Telephone: (617) 963-2429
Email: andy.goldberg@mass.gov

FOR THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

KEITH ELLISON
Attorney General

/s/ Peter N. Surdo
PETER N. SURDO
Special Assistant Attorney General
Minnesota Attorney General's Office
445 Minnesota Street
Town Square Tower Suite 1400
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101
Telephone: (651) 757-1061
Email: Peter.Surdo@ag.state.mn.us

FOR THE STATE OF OREGON

DAN RAYFIELD
Attorney General of Oregon

/s/ Paul Garrahan
PAUL GARRAHAN
Attorney-in-Charge
Natural Resources Section
Oregon Department of Justice
1162 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301-4096
Telephone: (503) 947-4540
Email: Paul.Garrahan@doj.oregon.gov

FOR THE STATE OF VERMONT

CHARITY R. CLARK
Attorney General

/s/ Hannah Yindra
HANNAH YINDRA
Assistant Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General
109 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05609
Telephone: (802) 828-3186
Email: Hannah.Yindra@vermont.gov

FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

NICHOLAS W. BROWN
Attorney General

/s/ Steve Scheele
STEPHEN SCHEELE
Assistant Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General
State of Washington
P.O. Box 40109
Olympia, WA 98504
Telephone: (360) 586-6500
Email: steve.scheele@atg.wa.gov

FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

MURIEL GOODE-TRUFANT
Corporation Counsel

/s/ Hilary Meltzer
HILARY MELTZER
Chief, Environmental Law Division
CHRISTIAN C. HARNED
Assistant Corporation Counsel
New York City Law Department
100 Church Street
New York, NY 10007
Telephone: (212) 356-1676
Email: chharned@law.nyc.gov