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2026 Deregulatory Agenda: Business Playbook

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The Office of Management and Budget's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs released the 2026 Regulatory Plan and Unified Agenda, outlining an ambitious deregulatory agenda across the executive branch. The plan emphasizes regulatory cost savings, domestic energy production, permitting reform, program integrity, consumer choice, and a shift away from several Biden-era environmental, labor, and social policy rules.

For businesses, the agenda is less a final scorecard than an early playbook: it shows where agencies are likely to focus rulemaking, resources and stakeholder engagement over the next few months. While many of these items have already been announced, what's helpful with this plan is to see how they relate to one another in timing. The dates cited in the agenda are rarely met, but they can be useful in signaling sequencing of regulatory actions.

Why It Matters—Risk & Opportunities

A regulatory agenda does not itself change legal obligations, but it is a useful early warning system for companies who want to get ahead of the federal regulatory process. It shows which rules agencies intend to propose, revise, rescind, or finalize—and therefore where companies may have opportunities to shape outcomes through comments, meetings, coalition activity, advocacy, and operational planning.

Key Agency Actions to Watch

Viewed through that lens, the most commercially significant agenda items fall into several clusters: environmental regulation, energy and natural resources, agriculture and food programs, and labor and workforce rules.

Environmental, Energy, and Natural Resources

- EPA: Reconsideration of vehicle emissions standards; potential repeal of carbon pollution standards for fossil-fuel power plants; revisions to construction permitting; narrowing of the Waters of the United States definition; and possible rescission of certain PFAS drinking water requirements.
- DOE: Revisions to electric-vehicle petroleum-equivalency calculations; updates to appliance standards rulemaking procedures; nuclear regulatory streamlining for advanced reactors; and implementation of Energy Dominance Financing for energy infrastructure projects.
- Interior: Rescission or revision of public lands, offshore energy, ESA, NEPA, oil and gas leasing, financial assurance, commingling,

renewable energy, and recreational access rules.

Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development

- USDA plans to strengthen oversight of SNAP retailers, EBT card security, child nutrition programs, WIC vendor integrity, and foreign agricultural land reporting.
- USDA also intends to revise SNAP eligibility and benefit parameters, including work requirements, categorical eligibility, alien eligibility, and the definition of eligible foods.
- Food safety and rural development proposals would modernize meat and poultry inspection, remove outdated standards, streamline WIC administration, and consolidate loan and grant program regulations.
- Energy-related USDA initiatives would ease oil, gas, minerals, and rural energy project approvals, including on National Forest System lands.

Labor, Workforce, and Benefits

- DOL plans to emphasize compliance assistance, opinion letters, self-audit tools, and targeted enforcement.
- Employee benefits rulemaking is expected to address alternative assets in 401(k) plans, health care transparency, drug pricing, and fiduciary duties focused on financial considerations.
- Workplace and employment rules to watch include heat illness prevention, emergency responder standards, tree care safety, lockout/tagout modernization, independent contractor classification, joint employment, home health worker exemptions, H-2A and H-1B reforms, respirable silica, and union financial reporting.
- Federal contractors and grant recipients should monitor anticipated changes to rules and requirements tied to DEI, apprenticeship, and merit-based opportunity policies.

What You Should Do Now

1. Map exposure. Identify pending agenda items that affect your permits, compliance programs, supply chains, federal funding, workforce model, or product strategy.
2. Prioritize engagement windows. Determine where comments, agency engagements, OIRA meetings, coalition submissions, technical data, or agency outreach could influence the final rulemaking record.
3. Avoid assuming immediate relief. Existing rules remain in force unless and until revised, rescinded, stayed, or invalidated; litigation may also affect timing.
4. Prepare for mixed impacts. Deregulatory actions may reduce burdens in some areas while new oversight, eligibility, reporting, or safety rules may increase obligations in others.

Bottom Line

The 2026 Deregulatory Agenda is an early signal—not a final outcome—

but it gives regulated entities a meaningful look at where federal agencies are likely to move next. Businesses who assess their exposure now, build a strong factual record, and engage before proposals harden will be better positioned to shape the rulemaking process, capture potential opportunities, and manage compliance risk as the agenda turns into agency action.

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