

The Federal Government's '10,000 Commandments'

In the Old Testament there are 613 commandments. Apparently, God deemed those to be enough to regulate almost every aspect of the lives of His people for thousands of years. You could read all of them in less than 30 minutes.

The American federal government, however, is not so succinct. There are over 1 million restrictions in the federal regulations alone (not counting the statutory law), and thousands more are added every year.

Each year the Competitive Enterprise Institute puts out an annual survey—*Ten Thousand Commandments*—that reveals the size, scope and cost of federal regulations. Here are some highlights from the 2016 edition:

- *The federal regulatory cost reached \$ trillion in 2015.*
- *Federal regulation is a hidden tax that amounts to nearly \$15,000 per U.S. household each year.*
- *In 2015, 114 laws were enacted by Congress during the calendar year, while 3,410 rules were issued by agencies. Thus, 30 rules were issued for every law enacted last year.*
- *Many Americans complain about taxes, but regulatory compliance costs exceed the \$ trillion that the IRS is expected to collect in both individual and corporate income taxes from 2015.*
- *Some 60 federal departments, agencies, and commissions have 3,297 regulations in development at various stages in the pipeline.*
- *The top five federal rulemaking agencies account for 41 percent of all federal regulations. These are the Departments of the Treasury, Commerce, Interior, Health and Human Services, and Transportation.*

- *The 2015 Federal Register contains 80,260 pages, the third highest page count in its history. Of the seven all-time-highest Federal Register total page counts, six occurred under President Obama.*
- *The George W. Bush administration averaged 62 major regulations annually over eight years, while the Obama administration has averaged 81 major regulations annually over seven years.*

You can find CEI's report [here](#).

Joe Carter is a Senior Editor at the Acton Institute. Joe also serves as an editor at the The Gospel Coalition, a communications specialist for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, and as an adjunct professor of journalism at Patrick Henry College. He is the co-author of *How to Argue like Jesus: Learning Persuasion from History's Greatest Communicator* (Crossway).