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Slash Regulation. Prioritize Growth.

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“Economic growth isn’t just ethical, it’s sublime,” writes my former colleague Eli Dourado for the Cato Institute. I agree. Here are the top three growth-inducing policies that I would prioritize. What they all have in common is the removal of obstacles to growth. And all are progressive in the sense that the Americans who will benefit the most are those in the bottom half of the income scale.

First, let’s start with an initiative that has supporters across the political spectrum: rolling back zoning and other land-use rules that slow growth by restricting the construction of housing, especially in coastal cities, where housing costs have skyrocketed making it hard for ordinary people to live there. Even modest housing deregulation, such as upzoning to allow taller structures, can substantially increase the supply of housing in the most prosperous areas of the country. This promotes economic migration to these areas, which can reduce poverty and inequality by giving lower-income workers greater access to higher-wage labor markets. As an example, look at how Fairfax County in Virginia successfully upzoned the community of Tysons Corner.

Next, do away with all government-granted privileges, such as tariffs, farm and export subsidies, and most occupational-licensing requirements for fields like natural hair-braiding or interior design. According to the Institute for Justice’s occupational-licensing report, on average the requirements for low- to moderate-income occupations in the U.S. cost around \$200 in fees and require nine months of training.

These requirements favor wealthier and politically connected interest groups at the expense of lower-income workers and consumers. And the health care industry should receive no exemption. Get rid of scope-of-practice rules which protect doctors from the competition of nurse practitioners. At the same time, allow doctors to serve patients all over the country and compete for business through telemedicine.

Finally, we must reasonably relax safety rules. Consider the environmental-impact reviews required by the National Environmental Protection Act of 1970. Scholars on both sides of the aisle agree that these reviews are in need of reform. They cause delays and drive up costs in infrastructure projects while rarely delivering on the promise of environmental protection.

Likewise, an overly risk-averse approval process slows down drug development. The higher safety of drugs that are available for use fails to compensate for the lifesaving drugs that aren’t brought to market as a result of costly approvals. The same is true of the safety

requirements imposed on the development of new technologies. We all want to be safe, of course, but being too risk-averse kills innovation and restrains growth. We need a balanced approach.