Amid Hiring Freeze, Trump Urges FDA to Work Faster and Cut Regulations

The agency is tasked with making sure our food and drugs are safe.

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The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has a lot of regulations, which isn't surprising considering the agency is tasked with ensuring our food and drugs are safe. But Trump has promised to cut the regulations by as much as 80 percent. He has also instituted a hiring freeze at the federal government and signed an executive order saying that for any new regulation introduced, two must be cut. What's more, he has signaled that the FDA shouldn't have to prove that new meds are effective before it approves them (instead, the FDA should need to show only that the meds aren't harmful).

So how's it going over at the FDA?

As Vox reports, Trump's efforts to streamline the agency are having the opposite effect.

"The only credible way to speed up the review process is to add additional personnel," David Kessler, a former FDA head, told Vox. "If you're serious about reducing drug review times, you are going to make sure the agency can hire the people."

Elaine Kamarck, of the Brookings Institution's Center for Effective Public Management, said she doubts the Trump administration will streamline and cut down the federal government. "Republicans always come in saying they're going to cut the size of government, but the only administration in modern times to reduce size of government was the Clinton administration.

"Republicans have a strategy," Kamarck told Vox, "and that strategy is called they don't like the government, they think it's too big, and they do things to make it not work right. When it doesn't work right—it's a self-fulfilling prophecy."

But one aspect of the Republican strategy is moving forward. The Senate confirmed Tom Price as Trump's pick to head the Department of Health and Human Services. Now Trump has to name a leader for the FDA. The names floated so far—Jim O'Neill and Balaji Srinivasan—are outside the FDA mainstream and don't even have medical degrees.

The FDA, Kessler said, "is made up of medical and scientific professionals who do their jobs. It

doesn’t help if there’s chaos, demoralization and demonization of the agency.”

For related POZ news reports, read “Trump’s Assumed FDA Pick Has a Controversial View on Drug Approvals” and “Tom Price Confirmed to Lead Department of Health and Human Services.”

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