



Out of Control

AND INTO CHOICE AND COMPETITION. Reason Foundation's web log on competition and choice in public policy. The choices are out there, and the ideas are here.

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Beware the Precautionary Principle

JunkScience.com's Steven Milloy on the precautionary principle:

As globalization fosters economic growth around the world, Americans should be vigilant of an unintended consequence: the imposition on U.S. businesses and consumers of the non-science-based, environmentalist-promoted, European Union-embraced standard known as the "precautionary principle."

*The precautionary principle is the subject of a new Washington Legal Foundation report entitled **"Exporting Precaution: How Europe's Risk-Free Regulatory Agenda Threatens American Free Enterprise."** Authored by Lawrence Kogan of the Institute for Trade Standards and Sustainable Development, the report describes how "international bureaucrats and influential activist groups use the precautionary principle as a vehicle to diminish America's competitive position in the global economy and advance special interest agendas hostile to free enterprise and technology."*

*Kogan aptly calls the precautionary principle **"regulation without representation."***

The precautionary principle is a scheme for establishing environmental, health and safety regulations that are based on irrational fears rather than empirical science.

Under the precautionary principle, activities, products and substances may be banned or restricted if it is merely possible that they or the processes used for their manufacture, formulation or assembly might cause health or environmental harm under some unknown and unspecified future circumstances. In other words: It focuses on purely hypothetical risks rather than actual hazards.

The precautionary principle inherently rejects scientific and cost-benefit analysis as bases for regulation. It is arbitrariness unleashed in the hands of powerful government regulators and others who have no use for facts or common sense.

Read the whole article [here](http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,175952,00.html), (<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,175952,00.html>) and (<http://www.cei.org/gencon/019,04994.cfm>) and download the full Washington Legal Foundation report [here](http://www.wlf.org/upload/110405MONOKogan.pdf) (<http://www.wlf.org/upload/110405MONOKogan.pdf>). Also see Ken Green's 1999 Reason study, *Seeking Safety in a Dangerous World: Environmental Risk Reduction Framework for Policymakers*.

Posted by lengilroy at November 21, 2005 09:59 AM