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*Through the Looking Glass: A Perspective on Regulatory Reform
at the Federal Trade Commission*

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Abstract by Alex M. Johnson

This article describes the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) efforts to develop effective strategic and innovative standards aimed at reforming the regulatory process. Until efforts at reform began in the middle 1970s, the FTC developed its industry-wide Trade Practice Rules (TPRs) through meetings where representatives from particular industries gathered in order to delineate rules and compliance standards. With growing changes in technological advances the FTC permanently shifted from TPRs to "industry guides," which incorporate an informal public comment procedure. Additionally, the author notes that the FTC adopted the now defunct Trade Regulation Rules (TRRs), a specific set of standards directed at remedying a narrow industry problem.

The article identifies the range of regulatory reforms that the FTC has implemented, including an accelerated regulatory review process. Much of the review process has entailed the consideration of whether a rule should be revised or declared obsolete. The public workshop conference is a vehicle where representatives of various organizations gather in an informal setting to weigh the dual effects of proposed rules, amendments, or industry guides. The article also discusses the FTC's shift away from solely regulating entities to law enforcement prompted by a concern for the efficient allocation of resources. The authors provide detailed and specific ways that the FTC has confronted this problem, including building collaborative partnerships with other federal agencies to ensure effective consumer protection and educating consumers on fraudulent activities within the various industries under the regulatory auspices of the FTC.