

**Democracy and Productivity:
The Glass-Steagall Act and the Shifting Discourse of Financial Regulation**

K. Sabeel Rahman
Government Department, Harvard University

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ABSTRACT

Regulatory reforms are not only the product of policy innovations; they are also shaped by the particular narratives, discourses, and arguments advanced in favor of or against reform. This paper examines the discourse of banking reform around the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933. The debate around the Act exemplifies a key shift in discourses of financial regulatory reform, away from a previous era emphasizing the need to make concentrations of economic and political power democratically accountable, towards a new discourse grounding regulatory reform in the need to promote productive economic activity by preventing conflicts of interest and excess speculation. This discursive shift in turn has implications for the political viability of continuing efforts to achieve financial regulatory reform.

Full paper available upon publication.