

Ducey identifying doomed state agencies, regulations

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Gov. Doug Ducey said Tuesday he already is preparing a shopping list of state regulations and state agencies he wants to kill.

Speaking at a conference of small business advocates, Ducey boasted of legislation he championed since taking office in early 2015 to eliminate restrictions as well as executive orders freezing new rules. But he said more are on the way when lawmakers convene in January.

“We want to shrink the 220 boards and commissions that exist and are standing in the way of job creation,” the governor told his audience. And Ducey said he wants accountability from agencies “that want to justify their existence just by creation of more taxes or spending in regulation.”

The governor was not ready, however, to provide specifics.

“I’m not going to give you a preview of the State of the State in September,” he said when questioned after his speech. But he insisted nothing is off limits.

“We’re going to look at any regulation that gets in the way of job creation that isn’t beneficial, doesn’t help the state protect the citizen or protect the consumer,” Ducey said.

The promise of more deregulation comes on the heels of the Legislature just this past year scrap-

ping existing requirements for some professions to be licensed. Ducey crowed in particular about eliminating state oversight of vegetable packers and yoga instructors.

“We want freedom for our yoga instructors,” he quipped.

In response to a question from the audience, Ducey acknowledged the decision by some U.S. firms to move their manufacturing operations offshore. But the governor, questioned afterwards, was not jumping on the proposal GOP presidential hopeful Donald Trump said at Monday’s debate to put a tax on goods imported from those countries.

“I believe in free trade,” Ducey said.

He did say it might be appropriate to have a discussion on what is free — and fair — trade. But the governor said that’s not really the answer to disappearing manufacturing jobs.

“We’re doing a lot of things at the federal level where you’re actually pushing a company out,” Ducey said.

“Why would an American want to take their company somewhere else?” he continued. “Are there things we can do at the state level and at the federal level, like getting rid of regulations, like lowering taxes, like allowing people to bring their dollars back into this country at a reasonable tax rate?”

And what of the fact that compa-

nies can pay their workers much less elsewhere?

“Well, we always want to have our workers paid well here with ever-increasing wages,” Ducey responded. But the governor said while the cost of labor may be “the most important part” of a firm’s decision to move offshore, he also believes that taxes and regulations can weigh in that computation.

“And that’s something that governors and governments can deal with,” he said.

Arizona has been particularly hard hit in this area.

In speaking to the Job Creators Network, Ducey touted the fact that Arizona has recovered all the jobs it lost in the recession.

But that recovery has not been across the board.

The most recent figures from the state Office of Economic Opportunity put manufacturing employment at 159,100. That just about 11,000 more than when the sector hit bottom in 2010 — and more than 29,000 fewer than the pre-recession peak of 188,200 in April 2006.

On the subject of Trump, the governor parted ways from some of the more partisan members of his Republican Party who gave the candidate glowing reviews and declared him the clear winner of Monday’s face-off.

“The debate was something that really both candidates showed where they are and what they believe,” Ducey opined. “I don’t know how many people were swayed one way or another.”

His takeaway from the debate — and the campaign?

“The more I see that Washington, D.C. is the problem, they’re trying to solve all of our problems from D.C.,” he said. “They’re doing a very bad job.”

And he wasn’t necessarily saying that’s the fault of either party.

“They’re divided, no good ideas move forward, they don’t know how to balance a budget,” the governor explained.