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House GOP Leadership's Budget Proposal an Attack on Public Health and the Environment

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Anna Aurilio, Environment America's Washington, D.C. Director, issued the following statement in anticipation of the House GOP leadership's proposed short-term government funding bill, expected later today:

“Americans have a fundamental right to breathe clean air and to drink clean water. In economic times good or bad, it's critical that our government protect public health and maintain our public lands and infrastructure.

“Consequently, we are dismayed to see House GOP leadership abandoning America's core environmental and public health programs. Their proposed budget makes draconian cuts to the very programs that will ensure the protection of clean air and clean water, and keeps our country caught in its stifling dependence on dirty fossil fuels.

“GOP leadership's willingness to starve critical infrastructure programs like EPA's clean water state revolving fund, set to lose nearly a billion dollars; and the Land and Water Conservation Fund, at risk of losing \$348 million, screams of shortsightedness and irresponsibility.

“Allowing the water infrastructure in this country to go into complete disrepair will lead to a water quality crisis. These projects protect our drinking water, stop sewage from polluting our waterways, and make our cities cleaner and greener.

“GOP leadership's attempts to slash land and water conservation funding represent a real threat to the American people. For forty-five years, LWCF funds have been used to protect our waters, wildlife and open spaces, and provide communities with invaluable recreational opportunities. If Congress is successful in implementing these egregious budget cuts, they will put conservation projects in almost every state at risk of being permanently forsaken.

“Some of the proposed cuts are just a symptom of cynical politics. Although we appreciate that the House GOP leadership is making some cuts in dirty and dangerous energy programs, it’s impossible to justify devastating the budget for innovative and safe clean energy programs while merely trimming the budgets for fossil fuels and nuclear energy. In neglecting clean energy programs, in favor of maintaining funding for dirty energy, this proposal will only exacerbate public health problems like asthma, impaired lung function, respiratory illness, heart conditions and premature death.

“Other cuts are just tragic. There is no comfort to be found in the \$400 million this budget would rend from the hands of poor American families who are struggling to keep the heat on in their homes. Thousands of Americans rely on the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to help pay their heating bills and to make their homes more energy efficient. It is absurd that we would promote polluting oil companies while shortchanging effective energy efficiency programs for the Americans who are most in need.

“Now is the time to support forward thinking investment in clean energy and efficiency, protect the water we drink and the air we breathe, and preserve public lands for future generations.

“In this flawed proposal, the House GOP leadership has left almost no stone unturned in their attempt to gut our foundational public health and environmental protections while literally leaving Americans out in the cold. We urge Congress to stop this proposal in its tracks and instead adopt a budget that invests in America’s health and environment.”

The following is a list of some of the relevant anticipated cuts in the House GOP leadership proposal (relative to President Obama's FY11 budget request):

- Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (EERE) programs lose \$899 million (38% decrease)
- Fossil Fuel investment is only reduced by \$31 million (4% decrease)
- The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) loses \$400 million
- The Land and Water Conservation Fund loses \$348 million
- EPA Clean Water State Revolving Fund for water infrastructure improvements loses \$950 million.
- EPA loses \$1.6 billion from their general fund
- EPA GHG Reporting Registry is cut by \$9 million
- EPA Cap and Trade Technical Assistance is cut by \$5 million
- EPA State and Local Air Quality Management is cut by \$25 million
- Obama's High Speed Rail program loses \$1 billion, eliminating the program
- The Department of Energy Office of Science loses \$1.1 billion

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Environment America is a federation of 29 citizen-based state groups working toward a cleaner, greener, healthier future.