

Action Alert: Hold Congress Accountable for Vote to Strip Public Health Protections

Early Saturday morning the Republican controlled House of Representatives passed their FY11 spending bill (H.R. 1) by a vote of 235-189. Upon introduction the bill blocked the EPA's ability to address carbon pollution and included budget cuts that would cripple critical programs to protect public health. During the floor debate last week, the bill was loaded down by additional policy earmarks that would further put out air and water at risk. If signed into law, it would recklessly cut \$100 billion in government spending by Oct. 1, rollback bedrock environmental laws, and inflict grave harm to our economy and to our health. Specifically, this legislation would mean:

- **More life-threatening air and water pollution:** if the House Republicans have their way, the EPA's budget for protecting us will be slashed by some 30 percent this year.
- **More global warming:** the EPA will be stripped of its power to limit carbon pollution.
- **Less clean energy:** research programs will be hollowed out.

Additionally, several amendments were passed which prevent the EPA from carrying out its mission to protect the air we breathe:

- **Amendment #165 sponsored by Rep. Carter (R-TX)** would prevent the EPA from enforcing new standards to cut air pollution from cement plants. The amendment passed 250-177. As a consequence, the EPA would not be able to protect the public mercury - 16,000 pounds a year of it - and other toxic emissions out of the air we breathe. Sadly, this would lead to 1,500 heart attacks, 17,000 cases of aggravated asthma and 2,500 premature deaths every year.
- **Amendment #466 offered by Rep. Poe (R-TX)**, passed 249-177, would prevent the EPA from setting any limits on emissions of carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, sulfur hexafluoride, hydrofluorocarbons, or perfluorocarbons.
- **Amendment #84 offered by Rep. Pompeo (R-KS)**, to shutdown the EPA greenhouse gas registry, passed 239-185. This amendment would prevent EPA from collecting basic data from large emitters on how much carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping pollutants are being released into the air.

These attacks on our air, water, and land are unacceptable. House Members that voted for H.R. 1 must be held accountable. Instead of sending a letter directly to your Representative, consider sending a letter to the Editor of your local newspaper. This is an opportunity to share the devastating and broad reaching implications of this legislation with other concerned constituents. It is time for the Senate to assemble their own budget package and it will be critical to hold Senators responsible for their actions.

Sample LTE for Members that Voted to undo public health protections:

Last week our Congressman, XXXX, sided with corporate interests when s/he voted for a budget bill stuffed with special interest earmarks to protect big polluters while at the same time slashing funding for cleaning up our air and water. What does this mean for my family and yours? It means more pollution, more soot, smog, carbon and mercury, more asthma attacks, and more trips to the hospital. It means rolling back safeguards that protect our children from inhaling pollution that burns their lungs and causes cancer.

I'm all for getting federal spending under control and addressing our deficits in a serious way. But last week's circus wasn't about carefully crafting a budget that protects and advances American priorities, it was about rolling back 40 years of effective public health and environmental safeguards in the name of protecting the special interests who fund campaigns to elect people like XXXXXX to Congress. The new Congress promised to listen to the people, but if Congressman XXXXX came and sat at my kitchen table he'd have had an earful about protecting our air, water and public health. (153 words)

Sample LTE for Members that Voted against the Republican package:

Last week, our congressman, XXXXX, stood his/her ground and voted against a budget bill that slashes funding for everything from health to education, and is loaded down with special interest earmarks that rollback our ability to set pollution limits to protect our air and water. The priorities in this bill are upside down. Billions in tax breaks for corporate polluters were preserved, while big polluters were given special deals and the programs to protect public health and clean air and water are under attack. Congressman XXX should be thanked for voting the right way on this budget. His “NO” vote was a rebuke of mixed up priorities and a vote in favor of the health and well being of our families, our children, our air, our water, and our health. Now, it’s up to our Senators, XXXX and XXXX, to stand for public health when this terrible bill gets to the US Senate. (140 words)

Shorter versions (fewer than 150 words)

PRO

Thanks to Congressman XXXXXX for voting last week against a budget bill that rolls back 40 years of effective public health and environmental safeguards while slashing critical funding that supports clean air and water. Our congressman stood up to the big polluters and their allies to defend the air we breathe and the water we drink. When Congress passes a budget that protects billions in taxpayer subsidies for the polluters and guts the programs that protect our health and families, their priorities are mixed up. Thankfully, Congressman XXXX’s priorities are straight. (79 words)

CON

Last week Members of Congress, backed by big polluters, passed a budget that let polluters off the hook and endangered public health. Unfortunately, our Congressman, XXXX, is one of them. His/Her votes did significant damage to our ability to limit pollution to protect clean air and water. He/She let the big polluters off the hook and now we’ll see more pollution, more asthma and other life-threatening illnesses. The House’s attack on public health and the environment must be rejected by the Senate. (88 words).