

Senate Rejects Slashing Environmental Protections - New Haven Advocate

Written by Peter Cunningham
Wednesday, March 16, 2011 11:09am -

Smart way

Environmentalists scored a major victory last week when the U.S. Senate rejected a House bill that would have slashed funding for the Environmental Protection Agency by 60 percent.

The measure would have barred the E.P.A from regulating greenhouse gasses like carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide as well as blocked enforcement of a host of initiatives like Clean Water Act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Chesapeake Bay clean-up initiatives. Included in the nays were Sens. Joe Lieberman and Dick Blumenthal of Connecticut.

“Connecticut families have a fundamental right to breathe clean air and drink clean water, and we’ll be working to make sure that both are protected in a final bill,” said Joe Blass, field associate at advocacy group Environment Connecticut, in a press release.

The controversial House bill cut \$61.5 billion from federal spending. It would have eliminated funding for Planned Parenthood, prohibited financing for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, reduced financing for the National Endowment for the Arts, barred enforcement of new regulations on net neutrality and stripped \$50 million in winter heating aid for the poor.

The Senate also voted last week against a Democratic bill that would have cut roughly \$6 billion from current spending levels. With party lines sharply divided over how best to close record-setting deficits and a March 18 deadline looming before a government shutdown, budget negotiations remained locked.

Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) said in a statement on the Democratic proposal, “the smart way to bring down the deficit is for Congress to pursue a balanced approach of major spending cuts and necessary tax loophole closings, while continuing to make investments in areas like education, infrastructure, and our workforce.”