

House lawmakers introduce natural resource sustainability bills

January 28, 2019

Throughout the month of January, several bills were introduced in the House relating to natural resource sustainability, especially at the energy-water nexus.

On January 3, Representatives Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX-30) and Frank Lucas (R-OK-3) cosponsored the Energy and Water Research Integration Act of 2019 (H.R. 34), which directs the Department of Energy (DOE) to consider the critical link between energy and water use in its programs in order to “guarantee efficient, reliable, and sustainable delivery of energy and clean water resources.”

This bill also calls for DOE to consider non-traditional water sources and climate impacts on water availability, and to develop a new interagency advisory committee to facilitate energy- and water-related data collection and innovation. The advisory committee is required to help develop yearly technical workshops with non-federal experts and to update Congress every two years on its proceedings.

Representative Scott Tipton (R-CO-3) introduced two energy- and minerals-related bills on January 28. The first bill, the Planning for American Energy Act (H.R. 785), directs the Energy Information Administration to predict the nation’s energy needs over the next thirty years. It also requires the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture to create a comprehensive four-year plan for U.S. energy production that incorporates wind, solar, geothermal, natural gas, and other energy sources.

The second bill, the Education and Energy Act (H.R. 786), proposes reallocating royalties from federal mineral and geothermal leases to fund state and county level public education systems. According to Representative Tipton, the bill would send about 50 percent of excess federal revenues to counties and states to support K-12 and public higher education, and 50 percent would go to the federal government’s Treasury Department.

The drafting of these bills is reflective of the United States’ growing concerns regarding water and energy sustainability. These have been ongoing priorities at the DOE for a number of years, as illustrated by the 2013 creation of the Office of Energy Policy and Systems Analysis and a 2014 report entitled “The Water-Energy Nexus: Challenges and Opportunities.”

Sources: American Institute of Physics; Library of Congress; U.S. Department of Energy; U.S. House of Representatives.
