

House passes three bills concerning EPA science and regulations

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The House passed three bills the week of November 17 regarding the science that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) uses to issue environmental regulations. The bills attempt to change to how EPA reviews scientific data and how it issues permits. The first piece of legislation, H.R. 1422, concerns EPA's Science Advisory Board. The bill would mandate a quota to increase the number of state and local officials on the board, allow members of industry to serve if they disclose financial conflicts of interests, and limit participation by academics who have previously received EPA funding. Critics object that the measure would prohibit the most knowledgeable researchers from serving on the board and increase the role of corporate interests, hampering the board's ability to perform its intended role. Proponents argue that the legislation is necessary to adjust biases in the board's current makeup.

The second bill, H.R. 4012, is aimed at the "secret science" behind current EPA regulations. It stipulates that all data the agency uses to inform its policies must be publicly available in reproducible form. The bill's supporters contend that this will increase transparency in EPA regulation. However, many within the scientific community and some Democrats object strongly because peer-reviewed studies often use confidential health information that cannot be released without violating federal law. Critics also argue that this legislation would prohibit the EPA from using the best available science, undermining its ability to effectively regulate.

The third measure, H.R. 4795, is designed to expedite the permitting process for new industrial facilities by exempting companies from abiding by new National Ambient Air Quality Standards if final regulations and implementation guidelines are not issued concurrently with the standard.

The White House has threatened to veto these bills if they pass the Senate and go to the President for signature.

Sources: Congress.gov, E&E News
