

WASHINGTON, DC – This week the members of the House of Representatives Sustainable Energy & Environment Coalition (SEEC) announced their opposition to Republican legislation that would gut funding for important protections for public health and the environment, and defund vital domestic clean energy programs.

The House of Representatives will vote this week on H.R. 1, the Full Year Continuing Appropriations Act, to fund federal government operations for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2011. This Republican legislation – referred to as a “Continuing Resolution” or “CR” – would make severe cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) budget, including provisions that will prohibit the agency from implementing essential safeguards for clean air and water. H.R. 1 would also make drastic cuts to the previously small budgets of Department of Energy (DOE) energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives, and slash funding for important federal programs to protect American lands, water, and wildlife, promote energy innovation and job creation, and address climate change.

The GOP legislation does nothing to address lucrative federal tax subsidies enjoyed by large oil companies, for which President Obama and House Democrats have called for an end, and which could save taxpayers more than \$40 billion over the next ten years. The bill also makes comparatively small cuts to federal programs that support fossil fuels.

“This Republican spending bill won’t create jobs, won’t grow the economy and won’t make our families healthier,” said SEEC Co-Chair Rep. Jay Inslee (WA-01). “The Republican attacks on the Clean Air Act, and on important clean energy initiatives - all the while continuing to subsidize dirty fuels - are unacceptable. The Congress and Administration must take steps to reduce the federal budget deficit. However we must also protect Americans, and give them the policies that will allow them to lead the twenty-first century, as they did the twentieth. Instead of these short-sighted and dangerous cuts, we must take this opportunity to engage in the clean energy race so that we can create the jobs of this new century. Doing so will free us from the grip of dirty and dangerous fossil fuels and provide the next generation with a sound foundation of prosperity.”

“Trimming budgets is about focusing on our priorities: Eliminating the waste and focusing on the programs that can develop our economy and grow the middle class. Unfortunately, the Republican funding bill got it backwards: it protects the big oil subsidies of the past while cutting the job-creating clean energy programs that are our future. Congress and the Administration need to work together to reduce the federal budget deficit, however the Republicans’ proposed CR will endanger our nation’s global competitiveness at the wrong time,” said SEEC Co-Chair Rep. Steve Israel (NY-02).

“This budget amounts to a ‘death panel’ to efforts to innovate and to protect our environment, our public health, and our open spaces,” said SEEC Vice Chair Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12). “Rather than investing in clean energy innovation, the Republican spending plan would eliminate

thousands of clean energy research jobs, giving China another opportunity to pull further ahead of us in the development of sustainable energy technology. Instead of strengthening the Clean Air Act, the Republican budget would gut safeguards that have reduced emissions into the atmosphere of pollutants and chemicals that kill people. Rather than supporting the Land and Water Conservation Fund that preserves spaces otherwise targeted for development, their budget plan would cut the program by 80 percent. This is not a budget of which we can be proud.”

“The Republican’s CR arbitrarily kills jobs, endangers public health and is a slap in the face to environmental protection,” said SEEC Vice Chair Rep. Jared Polis (CO-02). “It will set our country back decades by silencing scientific research and keeping America addicted to foreign oil. Worst of all, it puts our children’s health at risk by handcuffing the EPA’s ability to police polluters. The CR’s draconian cuts are filled with sound bites, rather than sound policy, and is completely untenable.”

“As President Obama so eloquently spoke of during his State of the Union Address, we must out-innovate, out-educate and out-build our global competitors and win the future. Rolling back a law that protects the air our children breathe to allow oil companies - companies that are already reaping record profits - the ability to spew chemicals, smog, soot and pollution into the air just to please a lobbyist or a Big Oil corporation is irresponsible and extreme, said SEEC Vice Chair Rep. Paul Tonko (NY-21). “The Clean Air Act has been on the books for decades, with positive results for our economy, environment and businesses. Rolling back these protections will hurt our most vulnerable. We simply cannot afford to go backward.”

SEEC Vice Chair Rep. Gerry Connolly (VA-11), who has argued the importance of the Clean Air Act’s Clean Car Standards to increasing U.S. fuel efficiency and decreasing American oil dependence, said that “Republicans have proposed cutting off funding for implementation of the Clean Air Act, which could force Americans to send \$9.9 billion more to OPEC countries by reducing automobile efficiency and increasing our demand for foreign oil. Americans can’t afford to send more money to Libya and Iran.”

H.R. 1 would slash the EPA budget by more than 30 percent - the largest cut faced by the agency in the last 30 years – and also contains an unprecedented policy “rider” that would, for the first time ever, stop the agency from using its Clean Air Act authority to regulate a pollutant that endangers the public health. As the legislation is written, this rider would also result in a de facto construction ban in several states, and endanger the U.S. Renewable Fuels Standard and historic Clean Car Rules established by the Obama Administration and automotive industry in 2009. The rider would also negate voluntary green industry partnerships like EnergyStar.

H.R. 1 would also keep the EPA from restoring Clean Water Act protections for thousands of American streams and wetlands, and would defund important state revolving funds that protect and update clean and safe drinking water infrastructure. On top of this, the legislation targets the implementation of the Endangered Species Act, Toxic Substances Control Act, and laws that provide for the cleanup of hazardous waste.

Despite overwhelming public support for federal focus and increased investments in clean energy, the legislation also targets the federal government's flagship clean energy programs: Slashing the DOE Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy budget by more than 35 percent; rescinding American Recovery & Reinvestment Act loan guarantee funding for renewable energy projects; and cutting funding for energy efficiency programs that create jobs, and reduce homeowners' energy costs and carbon pollution.

In a significant contrast to the energy and environment budget cuts proposed by House Republicans, President Obama's Fiscal Year 2012 budget, released earlier this week, calls for increased investments in the research, innovation, and deployment of clean, home-grown energy technologies. In order to pay for some of the increased investments, the President's budget calls for an end to more than \$40 billion in tax subsidies for large oil companies, arguing that these mature and very profitable industries do not need the lucrative tax credits that they enjoy. SEEC member Rep. Earl Blumenauer (OR-03) and other House Democrats have proposed legislation to rescind those tax breaks for large oil companies, however, thus far House Republicans have shown no willingness to examine ending the unnecessary subsidies.

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The Sustainable Energy & Environment Coalition (SEEC) is a caucus of forty-eight Democratic members of the House of Representatives that was founded in January 2009 to be a focused, active, and effective caucus for advancing "policies that promote clean energy technology innovation and domestic manufacturing, develop renewable energy resources, and create green collar jobs throughout the product supply-chain, and polices to help arrest global warming and protect our nation's clean air, water and natural environment." SEEC is co-chaired by Reps. Jay Inslee (WA-01) and Steve Israel (NY-02). SEEC vice chairs are Reps. Gerry Connolly

(VA-11), Rush Holt (NJ-12), Chellie Pingree (ME-01), Jared Polis (CO-02), and Paul Tonko (NY-21).