



washington dc update

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House Rejects Attempts to Strip Clean Water Act Rider from FY13 Energy and Water Appropriations Bill

You have no doubt already seen articles concerning the rejection in the House on Friday of a Democratic attempt to trip a Clean Water Act related amendment from the FY13 Energy and Water Appropriations bill.

Very briefly, House Republicans succeeded in including an amendment to this legislation during markup in the full House Appropriations Committee. The amendment forbids the Corps of Engineers from moving ahead with Clean Water Act Guidance. On Friday, House Democrats attempted to remove this amendment during floor debate on the bill. They failed by a vote of 237 to 152.

It is interesting to break down the vote:

- 214 Republicans and 23 Democrats voted against stripping the amendment.
- 146 Democrats and six Republicans voted for stripping the amendment.

This vote is yet another example of the partisan divide that affects so many key issues in the Congress.

What is your opinion as a WESTCAS member? You will recall that the Obama Administration attempted to pass Clean Water Act legislation through the Congress in 2009 and 2010. But despite Democratic majorities in both the House and Senate, this legislation was never passed. After this failure, the Administration began moving to implement Clean Water Act reforms via Executive Branch actions without the input of Congress.

What is more important? Having Congress provide direction through legislation on important national issues such as the Clean Water Act before final Rules or Guidance is issued by the Executive Branch? Or should the Executive Branch be allowed to act unilaterally if the issue is deemed to be of sufficient national importance? That is the heart of the current battle on the Clean Water Act amendment.

Another Opinion...US Mayors Express Concerns

During a panel discussion in Washington last week, the nonpartisan U.S. Conference of Mayors called on Congress to consider amending the law to reduce compliance costs for municipalities.

“Serious changes must be made to decrease the excessive costs being passed down to taxpayers through enormous rate hikes, hitting our citizens where it hurts the most,” Tom Cochran, head of the mayors group, said in a statement.

The mayors proposed capping overall compliance costs, limiting liability for local governments operating under permits and basing compliance schedules on local affordability.

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