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Iowa Environmental Council Concerned by Passage of House Budget Resolution

Could Lead to Serious Cuts in Environmental Funding, Threatening Iowa Air and Water

(Des Moines) Iowa's public lands, clean air, and drinking water are jeopardized by the budget outline passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in the dead of night.

After months of on-again, off-again negotiations, the U.S. House passed their version of the fiscal year 2007 budget resolution just after midnight Thursday, which includes serious cuts to environmental funding and sets the wrong priorities for the nation.

The budget resolution provides an outline of funding for the coming year. While the bill is not legally binding, it does set a cap on overall funding and is followed closely by Appropriations Committees as they allocate specific program funding.

Although the House bill funds most domestic programs slightly above President Bush's recommended levels, funding for environmental programs remain at the same low level as in the Bush budget. The overall House budget falls \$8.8 billion short of 2006 domestic discretionary funding, after accounting for inflation.

In contrast, the budget resolution passed by the Senate set funding slightly above the 2006 levels.

"This bill sets a dangerous precedent for the health of our planet and our nation," Rich Leopold, Iowa Environmental Council Executive Director said. "By cutting funding to a large variety of environmental health programs, our drinking water and air quality will suffer. In addition, the ability of farmers to care for the land could be damaged by the shortsighted cuts in this bill."

On the revenue side, the House budget assumes most of President Bush's 2001 and 2003 tax cuts would be made permanent, which would cost the country more than \$228 billion in lost revenue.

The proposed Administration and House budget cuts could result in:

- ***Dirtier drinking water, rivers and lakes due to cuts in funding to wastewater and sewage treatment facilities.***
The Clean Water State Revolving Fund would be cut by \$200 million in FY2007.
- ***Diminished protection of public lands including parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and open spaces.***

The Land and Water Conservation Fund would receive only \$85 million this year; \$900 million is required to fully fund the program.

- ***Farmers and ranchers losing incentive to practice good environmental and conservation stewardship on their working lands.***

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program would be cut by 21 percent and the Conservation Security Program would be cut by eight percent.

The differences in the House and Senate versions of the budget resolution must be negotiated before final passage. In addition to the large disparity in funding levels in the two bills, the Senate bill includes a provision to allow drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which the House bill does not.

Under Congressional budget rules, on May 15 Congress was able to move forward with the FY2007 Appropriations funding bills even absent a final budget resolution.

“While it’s unclear if the House and Senate will ever agree on a final budget resolution, each bill is clearly a line in the sand. We can expect the specific program funding to closely mirror the caps that were included in each version of the budget resolution,” Leopold said.

“We remain extremely concerned by any actions to slash environmental funding. The long-term health and environmental impacts of expected cuts will end up costing our country much more in the end,” Leopold added.