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From: POLITICO Pro Energy Whiteboard
Sent: Thur 6/15/2017 4:24:36 PM
Subject: Ozone, brownfields bill clear House subcommittee

By Eric Wolff

06/15/2017 12:18 PM EDT

A House Energy and Commerce subcommittee today advanced a pair of bills to reauthorize a brownfields cleanup program and delay ozone standards.

The environment panel split along partisan lines on the Ozone Standards Implementation Act (H.R. 806), which would delay implementation of the 2015 ozone standard through 2025 and stretch the regular air quality standard review period from five years to 10. Democrats attacked the bill as weakening Clean Air Act standards while Republicans said the delay would allow regions to catch up to older standards. Democrats offered several amendments all of which were defeated.

A draft brownfields bill advanced on voice vote. The bill reauthorizes and adjusts the brownfields program to raise the cap on federal grant amounts for individual sites. The bill received bipartisan support in the committee, though ranking member Rep. Frank Pallone (D-N.J.) said he wished the program would get more funding.

Democrats also took the time to wonder why no EPA officials had appeared before the committee to address any of the bills at issue.

"We've had no administration witnesses before this committee since the beginning of the year, something that has never happened before in my time on the committee," said Rep. Gene Green (D-Texas).

WHAT'S NEXT: Chairman Greg Walden will likely schedule a full committee markup on the bills.

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