

# GOP surrenders on Arctic drilling plan

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House Republican leaders have unexpectedly agreed to remove a proposal allowing oil drilling in an Alaskan wildlife refuge from a pending budget bill.

The GOP leaders agreed late Wednesday to strip the proposal from a \$54 billion budget-cutting measure -- a move seen as a defeat for President Bush, who earlier this week applied pressure to Republicans to save the proposal and who even tried wooing conservative Democrats, the Washington Post reported.

Not only didn't the Democrats accede to the president's wishes, but at least 22 Republicans told the House leadership they would not vote for the budget bill unless the drilling provision was removed, the Post said.

The budget measure, even without the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil drilling proposal, is controversial since it would allow states to increase fees for Medicaid recipients, cut monies for student loans and child support enforcement, reduce farm supports and further restrict access to food stamps.

Sarah Chamberlain, executive director of the Republican Mainstreet Partnership, the coalition leading the oil drilling negotiations, told the Post in exchange for deleting the oil drilling provisions from the budget measure, GOP moderates promised enough votes to all but ensure passage.

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