

House passes GOP bills targeting EPA's 'secret science'

March 18 2015, byMatthew Daly

The House has passed two Republican-backed bills that would place new restrictions on the Environmental Protection Agency.

A bill approved Wednesday would require the EPA to disclose scientific data behind proposed regulations, while a measure passed Tuesday would prohibit the agency from appointing registered lobbyists to the EPA's Science Advisory Board.

Both were approved largely along party lines. The scientific data bill was approved 241-175, while the [advisory board](#) measure was approved 236-181.

Republicans said the bills would increase transparency at the EPA and make it more accountable to the public.

"Right now, the EPA is trying to impose harmful regulations based on scientific studies that no one can check—not the public, not independent scientists, not even the United States Congress,' said House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif. "It's called 'secret science' and it's wrong."

If the EPA or any other agency proposes a rule that adds costs to businesses or infringes on private property, "the people have every right to know why," McCarthy said.

The White House has threatened to veto the measures, saying they could

delay or prevent environmental decisions and hurt the ability of the science board to advise the agency.

If adopted into law, the bill on [scientific data](#) could be used to prevent EPA from proposing or finalizing a regulation until legal challenges about the legitimate withholding of certain scientific and technical information are resolved, the White House said in a statement. Releasing data underlying some scientifically important studies could violate the privacy of test subjects or compromise confidential business information, the White House said.

Similarly, the White House said the measure restricting service on the EPA's Science Advisory Board could preclude the nomination of scientists with significant expertise in their fields.

Rep. Alcee Hastings, D-Fla., dismissed the bills as attempts by "corporate interests to compromise the EPA's integrity" and stock its science review board with business sympathizers.

The claim of "'secret science' might sound scary, but the rhetoric has outpaced the reality," Hastings said. "This bill will not improve EPA science or make it more transparent."

Rep. Frank Lucas, R-Okla., said some members of the EPA's Science Advisory Board have received grant money from the agency or expressed policy preferences in the same areas they are asked to study independently.

"The heavy costs of EPA's regulations warrant some degree of public oversight to ensure SAB's findings are free from bias or conflicts of interest and not simply provided by a set of hand-picked advisers," Lucas said.

Both bills now go to the Senate.

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