

Environmental Funding

Senate Committee on Appropriations

The main duty of the Senate Appropriations Committee is to write legislation to allocate federal funds to the rest of the government and general public. According to the United States Senate Committee on Appropriations, the approved allocations for the Interior and Environment Subcommittee for the 2016 fiscal year is a total of \$31.06 billion. The Subcommittee for the Interior and Environment deals mainly with environmental projects such as addressing funding for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In addition, some of the other current issues regarding the environment and interior include the speculation over global warming, the necessity of continued maintenance of National Parks, and the funding for alternative energy projects. Environmental Projects that are funded include keeping and providing clean water to the United States, waste water treatment on a local and national level, conservation projects, cleanup tasks, and emission reductions.

The EPA was created in December of 1970 upon the rise of the environmentalist movements and growing concerns with technologies put into place after World War II and the Cold War. It was originally created to consolidate a number of government organizations, but since its founding has focused more on the safety of the public and the environment. It is important because of its ability to cooperate with other government organizations to provide large-scale measuring, monitoring, and modeling the environment. According to the EPA.gov, the purpose of the EPA is “to protect human health and the environment.”¹ There are seven platforms to the mission of the EPA including:

“to ensure that all Americans are protected from significant risks to human health and the environment where they live, learn and work; national efforts to reduce environmental risk are based on the best available scientific information; federal laws protecting human health and the environment are enforced fairly and effectively; environmental protection is in integral consideration in U.S. concerning natural resources, human health, economic growth, energy, transportation, agriculture, industry, and international trade, and these factors are similarly considered in establishing environmental policy; all parts of society-- communities, individuals, businesses, and state, local, and tribal governments-- have access to accurate information sufficient to effectively participate in managing human health and environmental risks; environmental protection contributes to making our communities and ecosystems diverse, sustainable and economically productive; and the United States plays a leadership role in working with other nations to protect the global environment.”²

Without the functions and issues regulations that this committee provides, many believe the environment could become polluted much more easily and it could soon become unusable for future generations for purposes such as farming or even basic life. The EPA works directly to solve

¹ "Our Mission and What We Do," United States Environmental Protection Agency, last modified September 29, 2015, accessed February 2, 2016, <http://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/our-mission-and-what-we-do>.

² Ibid.

Environmental Issues through research and development as well as proposing and lobbying for legislation that will protect the environment in various direct and indirect ways.

In order to accomplish their mission, the EPA enforces the regulations and laws passed by the government. They enforce the regulations with the cooperation of other companies and also give grants to state, non-profit, and educational programs. The EPA's budget is also used with the study of environmental issues. Several labs around the nation are used to identify and solve environmental problems, for example, the study of global warming. Duties that the EPA does not address include endangered species and nuclear waste.

According to Congressional Research Service, in the fiscal year budget for 2016 there is "a total of \$7.42 billion for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA),"³ which was less than the requested amount and was also an overall decrease in funding for the EPA. Last year's enacted appropriation was \$8.14 billion. There are nine appropriations accounts for the EPA which include: State and Tribal Assistance Grants (STAG), Environmental Programs and Management (EPM), Hazardous Substance Superfund ("Superfund"), Science and Technology (S&T), Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) Trust Fund, Buildings and Facilities (B&F), Office of Inspector General (OIG), Inland Oil Spill Program, and Hazardous Waste Electronic Manifest System Fund. The account of those nine that receives the most funding on average is STAG, followed by EPM and Superfund. STAG funds most of the infrastructure programs of the EPA which "provides financial assistance to states, municipalities, interstates, and tribal governments to fund a variety of drinking water, wastewater, air, and brownfields environmental projects"⁴ according to the EPA.

The National Park Service was founded in August of 1916 under President Woodrow Wilson's first term serving the United States. Since its founding, over 55 areas have been designated as National Parks and over 400 other areas have been preserved as state parks and recreational areas. After the creation of Yellowstone National Park, the first NP, a national movement began a worldwide movement towards recognizing preservation of wildlife and conservation of land for public use in the form of a National or State Park. The mission of the National Park Service (NPS) now is to "preserve and protect the natural environment for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations."⁵ Each year parks experience over 275 million visitors for recreational purposes. The NPS has employed over 20,000 men and women and works with several other NGOs and over 220,000 volunteers. The funding that the NPS receives from the federal government is listed in the category of discretionary spending because it is left up to the Appropriations Committee to decide how much money should be allocated to this program. The

³ Robert Esworthy, "Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): Appropriations for FY2016," Congressional Research Service, last modified 2015, accessed February 2, 2016, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R44208.pdf>.

⁴ "FY 2015 EPA Budget in Brief" [United States Environmental Protection Agency], last modified March 2014, accessed February 2, 2016, http://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-03/documents/fy15_bib.pdf.

⁵ "About Us: What We Do," National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, accessed February 2, 2016, <http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/index.htm>.

requested budget amount from the NPS for 2016 is \$3.0 billion, which is \$432.9 million above the enacted level from 2015.

Currently there is speculation over climate change phenomena, which most know as Global Warming. According to the Dictionary Reference Source, Global Warming is defined as “an increase in the Earth’s average atmospheric temperature that causes corresponding changes in climate and that may result from the greenhouse effect.” In the past, climate change was brought to the public’s eye by environmentalists and was only a theory in the making with limited scientific research; however, recently the idea of climate change has become more widely accepted by the public. Some people do not believe that our climate is changing or that humans have an effect on environmental change. According to scientific research completed by the EPA and other private scientists, the Earth’s average temperature has risen by 1.4 °F over the past century and it is projected to rise anywhere from 2-11.5°F more in the next century. Scientists believe that these changes are mainly due to human activities because of the increased amounts of pollution, development, and emissions beginning after the industrial era. Some sources suggest and provide evidence that humans contribute a large amount to climate change, while others say that there still evidence is either inconclusive has not been taken into account for a long enough period of time to make an accurate conclusion. Because of this, the government has difficulty deciding how to deal with solving the issue of climate change.

The main laws that have been enacted regarding Environmental Issues include: the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. In addition, there are several others dealing with other safety concerns such as banning specific pesticides and those that deal with other toxins and pollutants like lead. The Clean Air Act with the 1990 amendments divided the country by region based on air quality. It created a standard by which to measure air pollution in that each region was required to set goals for amounts of pollution and implement solutions to reach these goals. The goals address the following air pollutants: CO, HCs, PB, NOx, SOx, Ozone, and Particulates. The objectives of the Clean Water Act with the amendments in 1987 were to eliminate the discharge of all pollutants (both point and nonpoint source) and to restore the quality of the public bodies of water in the United States to being fishable and swimmable. These objectives are achieved with local goals that are set and acted upon based on each watershed region. The goal of the Safe Drinking Water Act was to ensure potable water in the United States. There are four categories to evaluate the water under this act including physical, chemical, microbacterial, and radiological standards for solids, turbidity, temperature, odor, color, and taste. The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act was enacted in order to manage the disposal processes of solid and hazardous waste from operating facilities. Like several other of the laws described above, this law also divides the United States into regions to which they can individually set goals based on a particular standard specific to the area.

Alternative energy is another important part of the future of the environment and of America. Because most of the traditional methods for producing energy can be harmful to the environment due to the large amounts of pollution created, it is important to look towards cleaner-burning or alternative energies. Traditionally, the main sources of energy in the U.S. are fossil fuels: coal, oil and natural gas, which are unpredictable as to how long they will last to provide for the public. Now, the second largest category of energy sources is renewable energy including solar, wind, water, geothermal and biomass. Each of these newer energy sources are beneficial

because they are relatively renewable, abundant, sustainable, and are more environmentally friendly; however, they tend to be more expensive to produce and store, intermittent, and may take up a lot of space in production (i.e. wind farms, large solar panels/farms, geothermal plants, or hydro plants) There have also been investigations into nuclear energy, but the waste produced from this kind of energy is still an issue after several disasters that have happened in multiple locations around the world.

The Democratic point of view is strongly pro-environment. The platforms of the Party, according to OnTheIssues.org, are to “restore wilderness and watersheds for generations to come, honor hunting and fishing heritage via more conservation lands, reject choice of healthy economy vs. healthy environment, encourage open space and rail travel, and ‘we’ do not have to choose between economy and environment.”⁶

The Republican Party Platform is “conservation is a conservative value, but balance economics, private property ownership is key to environmental agenda, cap-and-trade market-based air pollution reductions, encourage market-based solutions to environmental problems.”⁷ While both parties support these projects, the main difference between the Republicans and the Democrats lies within how the Republicans are less likely to fund Environmental Projects.

In conclusion, the increase in awareness for the need for the conservation of the environment over the past 100 years through programs like the National Park Service and Environmental Protection Agency have greatly increased funding and support for environmental projects. Today, there is still contention as to whether climate change is occurring as well as which energy sources will be best for the future of America and the Environment. Because of the bi-partisan influences in the government, the amount of funding is highly debated for Environmental Projects.

⁶ "Democratic Party on Environment: Party Platform," On The Issues, last modified April 28, 2015, accessed February 2, 2016,

http://www.ontheissues.org/Celeb/Democratic_Party_Environment.htm.

⁷ "Republican Party on Environment," On The Issues, last modified April 28, 2015, accessed February 2, 2016, http://www.ontheissues.org/Celeb/Republican_Party_Environment.htm.

Questions to Consider:

1. Which Environmental Projects should be funded and why?
2. Which Environmental Issues are most important/influential to America?
3. How should the Appropriations Committee decide which organizations and efforts should be funded?
4. To what extent should the Environmental Project be funded (amount of funding for each different aspect like the EPA and NPS)?
5. How will the needs of supplying the future energy of America have an impact on the funding allocations for this committee?
6. How large of a factor should the government play in funding of these projects: should they continue to be supported for public reasons, or should the funding needs be met more by private companies and enterprise?
7. What approaches and areas to funding are most effective in helping to achieve the goal to preserve the environment?
8. What will happen to organizations like the EPA or NPS if they become defunded due to major budget cuts?
9. What happens when the Committee does not receive as much funding as the request- which programs will be cut and how does this affect the mission of organizations like the EPA?
10. What will an increase in funding make possible- how and where will the extra funds be used?

Sources for Additional Research:

1. For information about the EPA, Laws, current issues being decided visit:
<http://www3.epa.gov/>
2. For more information about funding with regards to public areas, like the National Parks, visit: <http://www.nps.gov/index.htm>
3. For more information about climate changes and facts about climate change, visit:
https://www.edf.org/climate/climate-facts-dangers-and-what-you-can-do?utm_source=gga&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=gr-ClimateChange&gclid=CjwKEAiA58a1BRDw6Jan_Plapw8SjABJz-ZWnTs7NjwQJhg2cb86pQru6Z1_3KuBhA9Eg2FySAUkaRoCzW7w_wcB
4. For more information about climate change- this is NASA's perspective:
<http://climate.nasa.gov/>
5. To see the budget for the 2016 fiscal year of the EPA, visit:
http://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-02/documents/epa_fy_2016_congressional_justification.pdf
6. To see the current laws regarding Environmental Projects, visit:
<http://www.nrdc.org/reference/laws.asp>
7. To see an example of a law enacted about funding for Environmental Laws and Projects, visit: <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t48c002.php>
8. For more information about different types of energy, visit: <http://www.wanttoknow.info/newenergysources>
9. For more information about the Democratic point of view on Environmental Projects, visit:
<https://www.democrats.org/issues/environment>
10. For more information about the Republican point of view on Environmental Projects, visit:
<http://www.republicanviews.org/republican-views-on-the-environment/>

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“Republican Party on Environment.” On The Issues. Last modified April 28, 2015. Accessed February 2, 2016. http://www.ontheissues.org/Celeb/Republican_Party_Environment.htm.

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