

To: Martha Maciel[mmaciel@blm.gov]
From: The Hill
Sent: 2017-12-19T18:45:21-05:00
Importance: Normal
Subject: Overnight Energy: Senate close to approving Arctic drilling | EPA cancels controversial media tracking contract | Trump officials sound alarm on mineral imports
Received: 2017-12-19T18:45:58-05:00

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SENATE TO VOTE ON TAX BILL WITH ANWR DRILLING: The Senate is due to vote late Tuesday on the Republicans' tax overhaul bill, which would open Alaska's federally owned Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) for oil drilling.

The House voted on the measure earlier Tuesday by a vote of 227 to 203, with all but 12 Republicans voting for it and Democrats joining those 12 against it. But then, the Senate's parliamentarian found three issues that would prevent the bill from passing with a 51-vote threshold.

Senate Republicans plan to fix those issues before the Senate votes, but it will necessitate a new House vote. It will then go to President Trump's desk, where he plans to sign it.

In a lengthy speech before the House vote, Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) brought up ANWR drilling as what he saw as yet another great provision in the bill.

"Some people have been working here since I was in the second grade on this project," he said, pointing to Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska), who has been pushing for ANWR drilling for more than four decades. Young cheered back.

"After decades and decades in this chamber, we are opening up a small non-wilderness area of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge for responsible development," Ryan said. "That is the most ambitious step we have taken in years to secure our own energy future."

Republicans are joined in their support for ANWR drilling by most Alaskans, the state's leaders, most Alaska Native tribes and the oil and natural gas industry.

Democrats kept up their fight against the bill and the ANWR provision.

"The Arctic Wildlife Refuge is really known as the last great wilderness in our

country, one of the great last wild places," said Sen. Maria Cantwell (Wash.), top Democrat on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. "But this legislation turns that on its head. It would make oil and gas development one of the statutory purposes of the wildlife refuge."

Under the bill, the Interior Department would be instructed to hold at least two auctions for oil and natural gas drilling rights in ANWR's small coastal plain area within the next 10 years. Lawmakers predict it will bring in \$2.2 billion in 10 years, half of which will go to the state.

EPA, PR FIRM CUT TIES: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Definers Corp. said Tuesday that they'd decided to end their \$120,000 media tracking contract.

The decision followed days of sharp criticism from Democrats and environmentalists and critical media reports. Definers works for numerous Republican political clients, and shares staff and offices with America Rising PAC and related GOP political groups.

Mother Jones first reported on the contract on Friday, followed by reports in the New York Times and elsewhere about how a Definers executive has been investigating EPA employees for potential anti-Trump bias.

The EPA and Definers repeatedly defended the contract, saying it is only for tracking EPA media coverage and that Definers is separate from America Rising.

"How we consume our news has changed, and we hope to find a vendor that can provide us with real-time news clips at a rate that is cheaper than our previous vendor," EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox said Tuesday.

Joe Pounder, the president of Definers Public Affairs, said the firm would end its work with federal government clients and instead focus on its corporate clients.

"Definers offered EPA a better and more efficient news clipping service that would give EPA's employees real-time news at a lower cost than what previous Administrations paid for more antiquated clipping services. But it's become clear this will become a distraction," said Pounder.

Pounder also said Definers would forgo contract bids for four other government agencies that "expressed interest" in the firm's services.

Read more [here](#).

ZINKE ALARMED OVER RELIANCE ON FOREIGN MINERALS: Interior

Secretary Ryan Zinke used the release of a report by his department Tuesday to sound an alarm bell over the United States' reliance on imported, foreign minerals, and call for more domestic production.

The report from the Interior Department's U.S. Geological Survey found that the nation is 100 percent dependent on foreign imports for 20 key minerals, and China is often the main producer of the minerals.

Zinke called the findings "shocking."

"The fact that previous administrations allowed the United States to become reliant on foreign nations, including our competitors and adversaries, for minerals that are so strategically important to our security and economy is deeply troubling," he said. "As both a former military commander and geologist, I know the very real national security risk of relying on foreign nations for what the military needs to keep our soldiers and our homeland safe."

The minerals the report examined include selenium, gallium, beryllium, cobalt, platinum-group elements and rare-earth elements.

Those minerals are critical for applications like defense, high-end electronics and motor vehicles' catalytic converters, USGS said.

Read more [here](#).

EPA NAMES CHICAGO REGIONAL HEAD: EPA head Scott Pruitt named Cathy Stepp, former natural resources secretary in Wisconsin, to lead the agency's Great Lakes regional office.

The region 5 office in Chicago has responsibility for Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin.

Stepp was named earlier this year to be principal deputy regional administrator in the EPA's Midwest office, outside Kansas City, Kansas.

She was appointed to the Wisconsin post in 2011 by Gov. Scott Walker (R).

"Cathy Stepp's experience working as a statewide cabinet official, elected official, and small business owner will bring a fresh perspective to EPA as we look to

implement President Trump's agenda," Pruitt said of Stepp.

Regional administrators do not need Senate confirmation.

Stepp's responsibilities will include some major Superfund sites in Indiana and the recovery from the Flint, Mich., drinking water crisis.

PATAGONIA HEAD REJECTS HOUSE INVITE: Patagonia CEO Yvon Chouinard rejected House Republicans' invitation from last week to testify on national monuments.

The leader of the outdoor gear company characterized House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Rob Bishop's (R-Utah) invitation as "disingenuous."

"I find it disingenuous that after unethically using taxpayers' resources to call us liars, you would ask me to testify in front of a committee for a matter already decided by the administration and applauded by the Utah delegation just a week ago," Chouinard wrote in an open letter posted on Patagonia's website on Tuesday.

"It is clear the House Committee on Natural Resources, like many committees in this failed Orwellian government, is shackled to special interests of oil, gas, and mining and will seek to sell off our public lands at every turn."

Patagonia's leaders have been publicly feuding with Republicans and Zinke in recent weeks over Trump's decision to shrink the Bears Ears National Monument.

Read more [here](#).

AROUND THE WEB:

The FBI is now involved in the investigation into Sunday's power outage at Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, the Associated Press [reports](#).

A judge will let Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro's (D) lawsuit proceed against two natural gas companies accused of cheating landowners out of payments, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette [reports](#).

A federal appeals court Tuesday allowed Maryland's purple line transit project to proceed, overturning a previous decision that faulted the environmental review for the line, the Washington Post [reports](#).

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT:

Check out Tuesday's stories ...

- Patagonia CEO rejects 'disingenuous' invitation to testify
- Trump admin: US reliance on foreign minerals 'shocking'
- EPA ends contract with GOP opposition research firm after media reports
- Dems ask EPA to terminate contract with GOP publicity firm
- Mining giant to leave coal group over climate change stance

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