

House Conservatives Step

By Dan Morgan
Washington Post Staff Writer

Conservative House members yesterday stepped up efforts to curb what they view as excessive government regulation of business by approving over a dozen legislative riders affecting oil refineries, utilities, appliance manufacturers, and other industries.

On the House floor, a provision was attached to an appropriation bill for the Department of Energy that will delay new or updated energy efficiency standards for home appliances. The provision, which swept through by a margin of 261 to 115, had been sought by U.S. companies who make a key part of fluorescent light fixtures.

Earlier, the House Appropriations Committee approved a \$60 billion spending bill that would limit the Environmental Protection Agency's use of funds to regulate toxic emissions from oil refineries and cement kilns, to issue standards for radon and arsenic in drinking water, to require the oil and gas industry to draw up plans for responding to accidents, to control sewer overflows into rivers, and to revoke or deny licenses for pesticides solely be-

cause pesticide residues are not allowed in processed foods.

Democratic moderates appeared stunned by the scope of the reforms being proposed in some of the basic environmental and energy regulations of the past two decades.

Referring to the environmental riders attached to the huge 1996 spending bill for veterans, housing, the environment and space, Rep. Richard J. Durbin (D-Ill.) said, "This is literally endangering American families." He warned of "a major league environmental disaster for the U.S."

But Republicans seemed to be gaining confidence as they met only spotty resistance from Democratic moderates allied with the environmental movement. Every attempt to strike the provisions in the bill before the Appropriations Committee was easily defeated, and Democrats themselves were at times divided.

An amendment by Rep. Charles Wilson (D-Tex.) to delete the rider affecting cement kilns was opposed by fellow Texas Democrat Jim Chapman, who had urged the inclusion of the rider in the bill. "EPA has drastically overstepped" the law in its approach to cement kiln emissions, Chapman said.

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Wilson, noting that the Dupont Co. had just spent \$50 million building a waste incinerator in his home district to conform to the Clean Air Act, said such companies would be penalized by the proposed relaxed standards.

On the House floor, parochial as well as ideological factors were involved in the amendment by Rep. Michael Parker (D-Miss.) that would cut \$12.8 from the Energy Department office charged with implementing new efficiency standards for appliances.

Parker, a conservative Democrat who favors curbing regulation, had been pressed by Magnatec Inc. of Mendenhall, Miss., to delay the regulations on grounds that the proposed standards would favor foreign fluorescent light component manufacturers. His amendment won the backing of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, who feared job losses. But it was strongly opposed by some appliance makers, such as Whirlpool Corp., which argued that the standards would reward advances they had made in energy efficiency.

Following the debate over the appliance standards, the House, by a 244 to 181 roll call vote, gave final approval to the overall bill, a \$12 billion measure financing the Interior De-

partment, certain activities of the Department of Energy and the arts.

On another regulatory matter, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman and Republican lawmakers agreed on a compromise that would let USDA proceed with new meat safety rules while continuing to address industry concerns, the Associated Press reported.

The \$60 billion bill for veterans, housing, environment and space was criticized by President Clinton yesterday as "unacceptable."

The measure reduces public housing operating subsidies by \$400 million, cuts housing modernization by \$1 billion, provides no funds for repairing severely distressed housing, and increases rents for tenants in public housing. It also ends funding for the president's National Service Corps, and cuts the budget of the Environmental Protection Agency by a third.

Appropriations subcommittee chairman Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-Calif.), in an effort to broaden support for the catchall bill, yesterday agreed to restore funding for the Selective Service System, and put back funding for NASA's Cassini mission to Saturn, a top priority of House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.).