

Wait, Who Wants to Spend More?

Republicans, generally, are seen as the political party of fiscal conservatism, but both the House of Representatives and the Senate are seeking to spend far more than President Obama requested in their respective energy and water appropriations bills.

The House version, which will be considered this week, spends about \$37.5 billion, or roughly \$259 million more than was spent for 2016. That's about \$168 million more than the president requested.

Earlier this month, the Senate approved its version on a 90-8 vote. That bill proposes to spend about \$261 million more than Obama requested. But unlike the House version, it contained almost no policy riders.

Earlier this week, the White House said it would likely veto the appropriations, not because of the higher spending, but because of the policy riders in the House version of the package. The Office of Management and Budget said the legislation includes "highly problematic ideological provisions," most notably limitations on federal authority over clean water regulations.

Those regulations, known as Waters of the U.S., have been heavily criticized by conservatives as federal government overreach. The Heritage Foundation's Daily Signal wrote about the policy rider:

Daren Bakst of The Heritage Foundation praised the policy rider for blocking what he described as an "egregious" regulation. "The WOTUS rule is a power grab and attack on property rights by the EPA and Corps," he said, "both of which are attempting to regulate almost every water in this

country.”

In addition, the legislation would amend the Clean Water Act to change the permit processes governing “fill material” and “dredge-and-fill” practices that impact both the mining and agriculture industry.

If the energy and water package passes this week, House and Senate lawmakers could go to conference to hash out the differences between their legislation soon after Memorial Day. But it remains unclear if conservative policy riders could survive the conference process.

Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., pledged in March only to support appropriations bills “clean” of what he considers “controversial riders.”