

Committee Advances Bills to Protect Consumers and the Environment

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Subcommittees Approve Draft Data Breach and Coal Ash Bills

WASHINGTON, DC – Members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee voted today to advance two critical pieces of legislation furthering the committee’s efforts to protect families and communities. This morning, the Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy voted to advance a draft of the Improving Coal Combustion Residuals Regulation Act by a bipartisan vote of 16 to 5. This afternoon, the Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade advanced a draft of the Data Security and Breach Notification Act by voice vote. Both bills now move to the full committee for consideration.

The Improving Coal Combustion Residuals Regulation Act, authored by Rep. David McKinley (R-WV), builds off the committee’s work from previous Congresses to establish a state-based regulatory program to ensure the safe management and disposal of coal ash. The bill seeks to improve EPA’s final rule issued in December and would eliminate the implementation issues by giving states the necessary enforcement authority to implement the standards set by EPA.

“This is a good bill. EPA developed technical requirements for coal ash that are protective of human health and the environment. This bill utilizes those requirements and makes them part of enforceable permits,” said Environment and the Economy Subcommittee Chairman John Shimkus (R-IL).

“This breakthrough idea works for states and for stakeholders, while preserving the protective requirements for coal ash articulated by the administration,” added full committee Chairman Fred Upton (R-MI).

The Data Security and Breach Notification Act is a bipartisan solution to address the growing problem of cyber crimes and protect vulnerable information from criminals. The legislation establishes a nationwide safety regime for data protection and breach notification. Ahead of the vote, authors of the legislation Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) and Peter Welch (D-VT) called for their colleagues to support their data security solution in an op-ed on CNBC.com. “Last year was dubbed the year of the breach. We are committed to making 2015 the year of bipartisan breach legislation,” they wrote.

During the markup, Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade Subcommittee Chairman Michael C. Burgess, M.D. (R-TX) pointed to charts highlighting how the legislation would expand consumer protections from today’s system of state laws.

“Finding a workable bipartisan compromise that can become law has been elusive. But I believe that by focusing on how the criminals make their money we can work together to broker a solution for the millions of Americans impacted by identity theft and financial fraud,” said Burgess. “Perfect cannot be the enemy of the good. And we must ensure that there are meaningful consumer protections in this draft.”

“Congress must do what it can now to help consumers, help the economy, and stop funding these cybercriminals. I look forward to working on this legislation as it advances through the committee to bring consumers the help they need,” said Upton.

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