Message

From: POLITICO Pro Energy [politicoemail@politicopro.com]
Sent: 7/16/2018 9:44:35 AM
To: Bolen, Brittany [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=31e872a691114372b5a6a88482a66e48-Bolen, Brit]
Subject: Morning Energy: Second 'minibus' pulls in — The great California divide — Trump-Putin meeting's energy potential

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 07/16/2018 05:42 AM EDT

With help from Daniel Lippman

SECOND 'MINIBUS' PULLS IN: With negotiations still stalled on the first fiscal 2019 "minibus" funding bill, the House Rules Committee will meet today on the second minibus, which means debate on a host of thorny, energy-related issues. The measure, H.R. 6147 (115), combines funding for Interior-Environment with Financial Services, and while not as controversial as some of the other spending bills the House is slated to take up, it'll offer lawmakers ample opportunity to zero in on the indiscretions of former EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, as well as address issues like what coastlines should be exempt from offshore drilling.

House Republican leaders are aiming to keep any fighting off the floor by curtailing the amendments to the two-bill package, Pro's Lauren Aratani reports. And because the Rules panel will likely seek a "structured" rule, the most controversial tweaks are expected to be cast aside. Still, Democrats will use debate over the spending bill to rehash Pruitt's missteps, Lauren reports, and pursue continued investigation into allegations that he misused taxpayer money.

The panel begins work today on more than 160 proposed amendments submitted last week to the Interior-Environment portion, including one to ensure EPA's inspector general will continue its investigations into Pruitt, and another that would bar funds from being used to install a private phone booth in or near the office of the Interior secretary. Another proposed tweak would require EPA to publicly disclose all funds used for top-level travel, within 10 days of each trip — a clear call to Pruitt's tenure at EPA.

ME is also keeping an eye on an amendment from Democratic Rep. Paul Tonko that would bar EPA from using money to adopt a rule that would keep the agency from using research without publicly disclosed data, as Lauren highlights. Dozens of lawmakers from both parties have also sponsored amendments that would bar federal funds from being used to support offshore drilling in various locations off the nation's coasts, as the White House seeks to expand exploration for oil and gas. Read more here.

GOOD MONDAY MORNING! I'm your host, Kelsey Tamborrino. The League of Conservation Voters' Gene Karpinski was first to identify Hawaii as the state that does not have a straight line forming part of its border. Today's question comes from Bracewell's Frank Maisano in honor of this week's All-Star game: Which presidents threw out the first pitch at an All-Star game in D.C.? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to ktamborrino@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter @kelseytam, @Morning_Energy and @POLITICOPro.

JUST RELEASED: View the latest POLITICO/AARP poll to better understand Arizona voters over 50, a voting bloc poised to shape the midterm election outcome. Get up to speed on priority issues for Hispanic voters age 50+, who will help determine whether Arizona turns blue or stays red.

What role will Hispanic voters over 50 play in Arizona this Fall? Read POLITICO Magazine's new series "The Deciders" which focuses on this powerful voting bloc that could be the determining factor in turning Arizona blue.

THE GREAT CALIFORNIA DIVIDE: California Democrats rebuked Sen. Dianne Feinstein this weekend and endorsed her progressive opponent, state Sen. Kevin de León, who has been embraced by climate hawks among other liberal activists in his long-shot bid to keep Feinstein from winning a fifth term. The vote offers a glimpse into the dynamics in the state Democratic party, POLITICO's Carla Marinucci and Jeremy B. White report, where infighting between moderate and progressive factions has taken over.

The decision to endorse de León delivers a much-needed lifeline to the struggling campaign of the state Senate president pro tem, who came in second in California's jungle primary earlier this year to earn a spot against Feinstein in November. De León has made climate and environmental policy keystone issues and has been endorsed by Climate Hawks Vote, 350 Action, 350.org's Bill McKibben and billionaire environmentalist Tom Steyer. The nod from the state party ensures his campaign valuable voter outreach information and the potential for an infusion of federal campaign cash, Carla and Jeremy report.

Feinstein on Saturday downplayed the symbolism of the de León endorsement. "This was not a close primary election, and there were 32 people on the ballot," she said of the June vote. "I take nothing for granted ... we work hard." For his part, de León told POLITICO on Saturday that he thinks "it's always good to have younger generations rise up and assume positions of leadership."

Still, the vote draws attention to the deepening divide between in state's Democratic party and what action Feinstein is taking to lessen the pressure. Last week, the California Democrat told E&E News she supports a ban on fracking in the state, something she had previously stopped short of saying. As the ranking Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, Feinstein has also touted her importance in the effort to oppose Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to the Supreme Court — another issue closely watched by environmentalists and industry alike.

Climate Hawks Vote Founder R.L. Miller said in a statement the group appreciated Feinstein's "new position on fracking," but highlighted de León's potential in California. "Kevin de Leon has shown vision, courage, and tenacity," Miller said. "He's an extraordinary leader for extraordinary times, moving California toward a bright future with bills like his SB 100 (100 percent clean energy by 2045) and SB 54, the California Values Act (sanctuary state) that was just upheld in court." Read more.

TRUMP-PUTIN MEETING'S ENERGY POTENTIAL: The president is in Helsinki today for his highly anticipated meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin. While the two have met before on the sidelines of other events, today's confab will be the first meeting between the two presidents, Jon Huntsman, the U.S. ambassador to Russia, said Sunday . Unlike official presidential summits, the meeting in Helsinki will not feature a joint statement or any predetermined policy results. "You don't know what's going to come out of this meeting, but what it will be is the first opportunity for these presidents to actually sit down across a table, alone and then with their teams, to talk about everything from meddling in the election, to areas where we have some shared interests," Huntsman said.

Of course, President Donald Trump made news last week on the Russian energy front at a breakfast meeting with NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg where he said Germany is "totally controlled by Russia" and specifically called out the controversial Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project. Energy Secretary Rick Perry said last week Trump thinks the "Nord Stream 2 is not in the European Union's best interest, and my bet is he'll be more than happy to tell President Putin that straight to his face," Axios reported . The State Department told Reuters last week that Western firms invested in the pipeline were at risk of sanctions, although Perry told reporters that sanctions would be "kind of the last place we would like to land" but said they were an option.

WHERE'S WHEELER? Marking another departure from the Pruitt era at EPA, the agency gave a heads-up that acting Administrator Andrew Wheeler will be in Canonsburg, Pa., this afternoon. Wheeler will be in the area to attend a meeting of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce, alongside Region 3 Administrator Cosmo Servidio.

ON TAP THIS WEEK: The Rules Committee will meet Tuesday to consider a resolution, H. Con. Res. 119 (115), that calls a carbon tax "detrimental" to the U.S. economy and "not in the best interest" of the country. The meeting tees up a likely vote later this week on the non-binding resolution, following a recent push by conservative groups to take up the measure. The legislation is led by Majority Whip Steve Scalise, Pro's Anthony Adragna reports, and could offer an interesting vote for Climate Solutions Caucus members, who have yet to weigh in on specific solutions for addressing climate change.

EPA ETHICS OFFICIAL DEFENDS FOIA PROCESS: Kevin Minoli, EPA's principal deputy general counsel, replied last night to the top Democrat on the House Oversight Committee, who on Friday pressed for a subpoena over the agency's handling of FOIA requests. In his letter, Minoli offers to brief Congress on the agency's FOIA Expert Assistance Team that was created in 2013 to "make the FOIA process at EPA better." While Minoli's letter acknowledges "EPA's FOIA program is far from perfect," he highlights the work of the FEAT and other offices, writing that they have "laid a foundation from which EPA's FOIA program could be a model of what a FOIA program should be, not an example of what a FOIA program should not be." Read the letter.

MAIL CALL! Thirteen attorneys general on Friday demanded in a letter to Wheeler that his agency withdraw an order to manufacturers of glider trucks that the agency will not enforce a strict 300-unit production cap for 2018 and 2019, which was issued by Pruitt on his last day. The AGs call the move "clearly unlawful" and a violation of EPA's policy against "no action assurances." In a statement, New York AG Barbara Underwood said Pruitt gave "a parting gift to polluters on his very last day as EPA Administrator — bolstering the Trump Administration's legacy of siding with corporations over people." New York, along with California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Washington, signed onto the letter, as did the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the California Air Resources Board.

— **GOP Reps. Greg Walden, Gregg Harper and John Shimkus** wrote to Wheeler on Friday, seeking additional information on EPA's process for reviewing grant applications. Read the letter here.

CLEARPATH ACTION BACKS UPTON: Jay Faison's ClearPath Action Fund will announce its endorsement of Michigan Rep. Fred Upton today. The clean energy advocacy group will begin running digital ads backing the Michigan Republican as part of a six-figure effort for his reelection. Upton, who is the chairman of Energy and Commerce's Energy Subcommittee, "has an accomplished record of shepherding many bills hitting every facet of clean energy innovation," Faison said in a statement.

MOVERS, SHAKERS: Matthew Mailloux, managing director at the American Conservation Coalition, joined the New Hampshire Office of Strategic Initiatives as Gov. Chris Sununu's energy adviser.

— **Katie Valentine** is now a media relations associate at the Conservation Fund. She is the former deputy climate editor at ThinkProgress.

QUICK HITS

— "California is preparing for extreme weather. It's time to plant some trees," The New York Times.

— "Energy execs set fundraiser for Fla. Gov. Rick Scott," E&E News.

— "Widespread unrest erupts in southern Iraq amid acute shortages of water, electricity," The Washington Post.

— "Fill 'er up, or plug it in? Oil, utilities fight to fuel vehicles of the future," The Wall Street Journal.

— "Pence family's failed gas stations cost taxpayers $20M+," The Associated Press.

— "National parks could get much-needed money for upkeep through bipartisan bill," ABC News.

HAPPENING THIS WEEK

MONDAY

Noon — The National Iranian American Council briefing on "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) 2.0: Iran, Europe, Trump, and the Future of the Iran Deal," SVC-210.

2 p.m. — The Environmental and Energy Study Institute holds a briefing on safely decommissioning nuclear power plants, HC-8.

4 p.m. — The Institute of World Politics lecture on "Energy Trends: Nuclear and Non-nuclear," 1521 16th St. NW.

5 p.m. — House Rules Committee meets to formulate a rule on H.R. 6147 (115), the "Interior, Environment, Financial Services, and General Government Appropriations Act, 2019," H-313.

6:45 p.m. — Smithsonian Associates discussion on "Making Sense of Climate Change," 1100 Jefferson Drive SW.

TUESDAY

8:30 a.m. — POLITICO's Pro Summit, 999 Ninth St. NW.

8:45 a.m. — The United States Institute of Peace discussion on "Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking: Combating a Vital Source of Terrorism," 2301 Constitution Ave. NW.

9:45 a.m. — Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing on "The Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2018," 406 Dirksen.

10 a.m. — House Natural Resources Federal Lands Subcommittee hearing on federal land bills, 1324 Longworth.

10 a.m. — The Atlantic Council discussion on "Ready and Resilient," focusing on disaster preparedness, 1030 15th St. NW.

10 a.m. — House Oversight Interior, Energy and Environment Subcommittee hearing on "Tribal Energy Resources: Reducing Barriers to Opportunity," 2247 Rayburn.

10 a.m. — House Science Energy and Environment Subcommittees joint hearing on "The Future of Fossil: Energy Technologies Leading the Way," 2318 Rayburn.

10 a.m. — Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing on the Interior Department's final list of critical minerals, 366 Dirksen.

1 p.m. — EPA meeting on pesticide health and safety, Rosslyn, Va.

WEDNESDAY

9 a.m. — EPA public hearing on "Proposed Renewable Fuel Standards for 2019, and the Biomass-Based Diesel Volume for 2020," Ypsilanti, Mich.

9 a.m. — House Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee hearing on "Powering America: The Role of Energy Storage in the Nation's Electricity System," 2322 Rayburn.

10 a.m. — Senate Commerce Committee hearing on "SHARKS! — Innovations in Shark Research and Technology," 253 Russell.

10 a.m. — House Transportation Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management Subcommittee hearing on "Are We Ready? Recovering from 2017 Disasters and Preparing for the 2018 Hurricane Season," 2167 Rayburn.

10:30 a.m. — The Center for Strategic and International Studies discussion on "Digitalization in the Industrial Sector: Implications for Energy, Technology, and Policy," 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW.

2:30 p.m. — Senate Indian Affairs Committee hearing on three bills, including S. 3168 (115), to amend the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 to make Reclamation Water Settlements Fund permanent, 628 Dirksen.

1 p.m. — The Atlantic Council discussion on "Oil and Iran: How Renewed Sanctions Will Affect Iran and World Markets," 1030 15th St. NW.

THURSDAY

9 a.m. — The Atlantic Council discussion on "Finnish Perspectives on Energy Security in Europe," 1030 15th St. NW.

10 a.m. — Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing on nomination of Mary Bridget Neumayr to be a member of the Council on Environmental Quality, 406 Dirksen.

12 p.m. — The Woodrow Wilson Center's China Environment Forum discussion on "Aiming Low: Wielding New Low-carbon Tools to Help Chinese and U.S. Cities Peak Carbon," 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW.

FRIDAY

10 a.m. — The Middle East Policy Council briefing on "Withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA): Options for the Trump Administration," 562 Dirksen.

CORRECTION: The July 13 edition of Morning Energy incorrectly attributed a statement related to Yucca Mountain. It came from Rep. Dina Titus.

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

To view online:
https://subscriber.politicopro.com/newsletters/morning-energy/2018/07/second-minibus-pulls-in-279903

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Lawmakers battle over busting budget to pay for veterans health care Back

By Sarah Ferris and Jennifer Scholtes | 07/12/2018 07:29 PM EDT

Spooking House conservatives and risking a presidential veto, Senate spending leaders are proposing to blow past budget limits to fund a popular private health care program for military veterans.

Minutes before they were to meet on Thursday, congressional appropriators canceled their first public conference talk that had been intended to settle differences in three of the 12 annual spending bills President Donald Trump must sign by Sept. 30 to avert a government shutdown. One of the three provides for spending on veterans.

The 11th-hour cancellation came amid a cross-Congress showdown over how to pay for a program that allows some veterans to spend taxpayer money on private doctors and hospitals. The question is whether to break budget limits, known as caps, to come up with the cash.

"They canceled the meeting. But it's all about the VA," Senate Appropriations Chairman Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) told reporters Thursday, apparently referring to GOP leaders. "Do we break the caps? Do we prorate everything else? Do we cut other veterans programs to fund this? We got a shortfall, and we got to work it out. And we're not there yet."

Congress needs to approve $1.6 billion for fiscal 2019, plus nearly $18.2 billion more in the two years thereafter, to fully fund what has been authorized for the VA Choice program and its successor within the new VA Mission Act.

The suggestion that Congress "break the caps" set by the budget deal, H.R. 1892 (115), struck this year is already irking House conservatives, who would be loath to vote on any final spending bill that goes above those limits — even in the face of an impending shutdown this fall. The idea likely would not play well, either, in talks with a White House that was already seen as surprisingly conciliatory in signing that grand budget deal.

Money for veterans programs comes with special political protections, however, since policymakers want to avoid the uncomfortable optics of fighting funding for those who have served in the military. And top Democrats are already trying to use that perception to their advantage.

"You don't go to a veterans assembly and say 'We're not going to help the veterans,'" Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), ranking Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, said Thursday.

The administration has been heavily involved in discussions for weeks. The White House budget office has argued that any extra VA money would be akin to breaking this year's budget deal.

"It's obviously critically important to give veterans the resources they need, and we think that can happen inside the existing caps," according to a senior administration official.

Leahy planned to offer an amendment during the conference meeting that would have added funding for the veterans health care program. The meeting was then postponed, he said, because negotiators didn't want to go on record against doling out that cash. A GOP aide said that Republicans weren't expecting any amendments in Thursday's meeting, the first time negotiators would meet face-to-face.

"A lot of the people were I think concerned, I'm told, that they'd have to vote today," Leahy said.

The issue isn't as simple as supporting or opposing money for VA Choice, though.

The funding problem began last month, when Congress enacted a bill, S. 2372 (115), that created a budget gap by switching the program's community care services from the mandatory side of the ledger to the discretionary side.

Democrats — as well as some Republican appropriatiors — are in favor of exempting the new money from Congress' strict spending caps. But many Republicans, including White House officials, say the cash should come out of the government's already-determined budget, even if that means trimming the toplines for other programs.

That means Congress would need to divert hundreds of millions of dollars from other programs into the veterans health care program, which until this year, was funded automatically.

For their part, House lawmakers have already agreed to pay for part of the program without blowing through budget limits. The veterans spending bill, H.R. 5786 (115), that the House passed last month as part of a three-bill minibus would fully fund the program for fiscal 2019.

In a statement to POLITICO on Thursday, House Speaker Paul Ryan called out Leahy by name, saying the Senate spending bill "neglected" to fund the VA program despite the House's action.

"This attack is the height of hypocrisy," said a senior House GOP aide. "Democrats are scrambling to cover up the fact they have not kept their promises as the House did."

House GOP leaders have repeatedly refused to adjust Congress' current spending cap to pay for the additional discretionary spending on the veterans program. Instead, Republicans agreed to pitch in that $1.1 billion by reshuffling existing money from the House's funding bill for the Department of Homeland Security.

Their Democratic counterparts, led by Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.), have protested the move, arguing that it will shortchange other domestic programs. Lowey's own caps-busting amendment was rejected by the spending committee.

The fight over the budget caps has been long simmering and nearly broke out into the open earlier this summer.

Shelby had long backed Leahy's amendment to surpass the caps, but the GOP chairman was forced to shelve his support for bringing it to the floor at the last minute after several conservatives raised issues with it, according to Senate aides.

Shelby even declared on the Senate floor in May that he would support a plan that exceeds the caps, warning that Congress' newest version of the veterans law authorized large sums of spending "without providing any way to pay for it under the spending caps."

"Fortunately, there is existing law and ample precedent for adjusting spending caps to reflect changes resulting from a shift in mandatory spending to discretionary spending," Shelby said on the floor.

Anthony Adragna and John Bresnahan contributed to this report.

To view online click here.

Back

Pruitt scales back EPA's use of science Back

By Emily Holden and Annie Snider | 04/24/2018 03:28 PM EDT

Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt announced Tuesday he would seek to bar the agency from relying on studies that don't publicly disclose all their data, a major policy change that has long been sought by conservatives that will sharply reduce the research the agency can rely on when crafting new regulations.

The unveiling of the proposed rule delivers a win to Republicans like House Science Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas), who unsuccessfully pushed legislation to impose the same type of change. The move also demonstrates Pruitt's persistence in pursuing President Donald Trump's anti-regulation agenda just two days before the embattled EPA chief is due to face fierce questioning from lawmakers about his hefty spending, expanded security detail and cheap condominium rental from the wife of an energy lobbyist.

At an invitation-only meeting at EPA headquarters with Smith, Sen. Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) and other supporters of the policy, Pruitt said the proposed rule was critical in ensuring that the agency was transparent about how it is making decisions to justify costly new regulations. It is the latest step Pruitt has taken to fundamentally shift the agency's approach to science.

"It is a codification of an approach that says as we do our business at the agency the science that we use is going to be transparent, it's going to be reproduceable, it's going to be able to be analyzed by those in the marketplace. And those who watch what we do can make informed decisions about whether we've drawn the proper conclusions or not," Pruitt said.

Text of the proposed rule was not immediately available.

The proposal, based on legislation pushed by Smith, is intensely controversial, and scientists and public health groups say it will prevent federal regulators from enacting health and safety protections. Nearly 1,000 scientists, including former EPA career staffers, signed a letter opposing the policy sent by the Union of Concerned Scientists to Pruitt on Monday.

Their primary concern was that many of the country's bedrock air and water quality regulations are based on research that cannot disclose raw data because it includes the personal health information.

But industry has its own version of the same problem. EPA often relies on industry studies that are considered by companies to be confidential business information when determining whether new pesticides and toxic chemicals are safe to use. Internal EPA emails obtained under the Freedom of Information Act show that EPA political officials, including Nancy Beck, who became the chief of the agency's chemical safety office last year after working for years at a chemical industry lobbying group, worried that the new policy would limit the agency's ability to consider industry data or would force companies to make this proprietary data public.

"We will need to thread this one real tight!" Richard Yamada, political official who led work on the new policy wrote to Beck after she raised the concerns.

It was not immediately clear if the new proposed rule included measures to address those concerns.

Rush Holt, CEO of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, said Pruitt's changes could keep the agency from revising public health regulations as problems arise or new data comes to light.

"On the surface it sounds so innocuous or even beneficial. What could be wrong with transparency? Well it's clear to me that this is not based on an effort to be transparent. It is rather based on an effort to be just the opposite," he said.

"EPA is particularly important because when science is misused, people die," he added.

Pruitt has been discussing the new scientific policy publicly for weeks, but it only went to the White House for interagency review last week. Such swift review is very rare for the Office of Management and Budget, which often takes months to vet a new policy. At least one group, the Environmental Defense Fund, has requested a meeting with OMB officials to discuss the rule, but OMB's website shows that no meetings have been scheduled with interested groups.

Many public health studies can't be replicated without exposing people to contaminants, and environmental disasters such as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill cannot be recreated, the group said, raising intellectual property, proprietary and privacy concerns.

Pruitt's predecessor Gina McCarthy, and her air chief Janet McCabe, in an op-ed in The New York Times in March said concerns about studies are dealt with through the existing peer-review process, which ensures scientific integrity.

"[Pruitt] and some conservative members of Congress are setting up a nonexistent problem in order to prevent the E.P.A. from using the best available science," they said.

To view online click here.

Back

Net neutrality, offshore drilling, tax-free churches: What's dredged up in the latest spending debate Back

By Lauren Aratani | 07/16/2018 05:03 AM EDT

House leaders will bring two more spending bills to the floor this week, still aiming to pass all 12 of the fiscal 2019 measures before federal cash runs out on Sept. 30. Albeit a softball compared to the more controversy-packed funding bills, this second "minibus" provides ample opportunity for political potshots and fiery policy debate.

House Republican leaders are expected to keep much of that fighting off the floor by curtailing amendments to the two-bill package, H.R. 6147 (115), which includes funding for the Interior Department, EPA, IRS, SEC and General Services Administration — among several other agencies — as well as federal courts and Washington, D.C.

But issues such as federal jobs for young immigrants, financial transactions with marijuana vendors and the indiscretions of former EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt are sure to come up as GOP leaders prep for floor debate.

The House Rules Committee is set to meet Monday night to wade through the more than 240 proposed amendments to the Financial Services, H.R. 6258 (115), and Interior-Environment titles. Because the panel will likely seek a "structured" rule, the most controversial tweaks are expected to be cast aside before the legislative duo is called up for floor debate. What to watch:

Sticking it to Scott Pruitt

Though Pruitt is EPA administrator no more, Democrats will use this week's spending bill to rehash his missteps and pursue continued investigation into allegations that he misused taxpayer money. One proposed amendment would withhold funds for finalizing any EPA rules Pruitt initiated, until the agency's inspector general completes its investigations into the former administrator's spending.

Another proposed tweak would require the EPA to publicly disclose all funds used for top-level travel, within 10 days of each trip.

The bill already includes a committee-approved, tongue-in-cheek provision that would bar the EPA's chief from purchasing fountain pens that cost more than $50, following reports that Pruitt spent $3,230 on especially pricey writing tools. And an amendment has been proposed that would essentially bar the Interior secretary from installing a private phone booth, after Pruitt spent $43,000 on a soundproof stall.

Supporting the marijuana economy

More than 20 co-sponsors — from both sides of the aisle — have piled on in support of an amendment that would prevent financial institutions from being penalized for serving legal marijuana businesses.

Disputing research requirements

Rep. Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.) has drafted an amendment that would bar the EPA from using money to adopt a rule that would keep the agency from using research without publicly disclosed data. Conservatives argue that the rule brings transparency to scientific research, but many scientists contend that the stipulation would allow the agency, under the guise of transparency, to pick and choose which research it will use for regulations.

Protecting employment for DREAMers

An amendment by Rep. Pete Aguilar (D-Calif.), and another by Rep. Darren Michael Soto (D-Fla.), would ensure immigrants protected under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program are eligible for federal employment. Although some moderate Republicans have voiced support for that effort, chances of action have grown slim after House Republicans failed last month to bring GOP immigration proposals to the floor.

Stopping offshore drilling

Dozens of lawmakers from both parties have sponsored amendments that would bar federal funds from being used to support offshore drilling in various locations off the nation's coasts, as the White House seeks to expand exploration for oil and gas.

Curtailing church donations

Several Democrats have endorsed an amendment by Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), and another by Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), that would seek to continue enforcement of the current prohibition on tax-exempt nonprofit organizations endorsing or donating to political candidates. House Republicans have included language in the Financial Services title that would basically ban the IRS from rooting out churches that break that rule.

Reviving net neutrality

Democrats have proposed an amendment that would restore the FCC's net neutrality rules, after the commission's repeal took effect this month.

To view online click here.

Back

Billionaire Steyer endorses de León over Feinstein Back

By David Siders | 04/18/2018 11:53 AM EDT

LOS ANGELES — Tom Steyer, the billionaire Democratic mega-donor, is endorsing Kevin de León in his longshot bid to unseat California Sen. Dianne Feinstein, the latest rebuke of Feinstein from her party's increasingly agitated left flank.

Steyer's endorsement - if followed by outside spending - could improve de León's standing in a race that he has so far failed to make competitive. Feinstein, a centrist Democrat, holds a massive advantage over the progressive state senator in both fundraising and public opinion polls.

"I have known Sen. de León for years and have fought alongside him on immigrant rights, expanding health care, and climate change," Steyer said in a prepared statement. "Our work together on behalf of all Californians has assured me that he would be a champion of California's priorities and values. Kevin de León has proven himself to be the best of the next generation, and I am proud to support him for U.S. Senate."

The endorsement was not unexpected. Steyer once considered challenging Feinstein himself, and he has appeared on cable television previously as a near-surrogate for de León. Earlier this year, Steyer described the contest on MSNBC as "incrementalism versus visionary thinking in the Democratic Party."

Lauded by many young, progressive activists in California, de León in February deprived Feinstein of her own state Democratic Party's endorsement, outpolling her by 17 percentage points in the delegate vote.

But the state senator remains largely unknown to the broader electorate in California. Feinstein leads him 42 percent to 16 percent among likely voters, according to a Public Policy Institute of California poll last month.

The race between Feinstein and de León is unlikely to be decided before November. With no prominent Republican running in the state's top-two primary in June, Feinstein and de León are both expected to advance to the general election.

To view online click here.

Back

Feinstein: I'm equipped to lead anti-Kavanaugh brigade Back

By Carla Marinucci | 07/14/2018 01:39 PM EDT

OAKLAND, Calif. — Sen. Dianne Feinstein, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, said Saturday that the vetting process for the confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court will be "incredibly difficult," and that her staff is reading nearly 1 million documents that she said could give red-state Democrats reason to oppose his nomination.

Feinstein made her toughest comments to date about opposing Kavanaugh's nomination while addressing a "Unity Breakfast" of her supporters at a California Democratic Party executive Committee meeting in Oakland. State party activists will decide later Saturday on an endorsement in Feinstein's race against progressive state Sen. Kevin de León.

Reminding supporters of her seniority in the Senate and her leadership position on the Judiciary Committee, Feinstein said she has helped write the party's modern-day battle plan for a Supreme Court confirmation. She said that she has sat in on more than 10 confirmation hearings for Supreme Court justices since she was elected in 1992. But Kavanaugh's nomination, Feinstein said, "is beyond, [it is] different from all of them. ... Because this man will be the deciding vote on most things we hold most dear."

"This president has said he would appoint the person that would take down Roe [v.Wade] ... and I take him at his word," she said.

Feinstein told Democrats that now, as the nomination process goes forward, "we have a massive effort going ... We collect information from everywhere," including the Bush Presidential archives.

"The vetting process of this justice is going to be incredibly difficult... it's estimated that 1 million pieces of paper that our staff is going to need to go through prior to a hearing," she said. "I can tell you this: That it is really key and critical that Democrats, including those in difficult states, get the support of our party so that they can do the right thing in this vote..."

Feinstein noted that "we have five Democratic [senators up for reelection] from states that Donald Trump won [by large margins], and this makes this vote difficult for them," she said. "For me, it's not difficult at all. But I'm the lead Democrat on the committee, and we will put together a kind of message, I hope, for the American people which will enable those Democrats to vote along with us."

To view online click here.

Back

Feinstein gets progressive smackdown Back

By Carla Marinucci and Jeremy B. White | 07/15/2018 08:01 AM EDT

California Democrats, torn by infighting between moderate and progressive factions, rebuked Sen. Dianne Feinstein's bid for a fifth term — for the second time this year.

The state party's executive committee voted Saturday to endorse progressive state Sen. Kevin de León in the general election, signaling what many fear will be a divisive Democrat-on-Democrat battle going toward to the fall in California, where the party hoped to put the focus on a host of crucial congressional races that could determine control of the House of Representatives.

The endorsement delivers a lifeline to de León's struggling campaign — and the party's imprimatur, which is accompanied by valuable access to slate cards, email lists and voter outreach machinery that will allow him to reach an estimated 2 million Democratic voters. And he could also get an infusion of federal campaign cash shared with the party, party officials said.

Feinstein, who was also snubbed in February at the annual state convention where party activists declined to endorse her bid for reelection, had pleaded for party unity prior to Saturday's vote. She asked the executive committee of the California Democrats, the nation's largest state Democratic Party, to choose "no endorsement" — what many saw as a strategic defense to head off an aggressive challenge for the party's endorsement by de León.

And in an effort to frame the endorsement clash in the context of the national political landscape, the senator's team circulated a "no-endorsement" plea signed by a half-dozen Democrats whose campaigns in contested California districts are a linchpin of the national party's strategy to retake the House.

The final vote gave de León 217 votes, or 65 percent — beating the 60 percent required threshold — versus 94 votes, or 28 percent, for the "no endorsement" urged by Feinstein, and 22 votes, or 7 percent, for the senator herself.

The Senate contest pits two contrasting pols: Feinstein — at 85, the oldest member of the Senate — and De León, 51, a former state Senate president pro tem and son of a single immigrant mother. She is a centrist long at odds with her state party's leftist activist grass roots, while he is a progressive who has called for new "bold leadership" from Democrats unafraid of confronting President Donald Trump head-on.

"I think it's always good to have younger generations rise up and assume positions of leadership," de León told POLITICO on Saturday.

His fight, he said, was not about "a gender issue ... it's not an age issue." Pointing to progressive icons Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, de León said, "it's about the right values."

The weekend's nail-biter over the party's Senate general election endorsement underscored the depths of the bitter divisions still lingering from the 2016 battles between more progressive backers of Sanders' presidential bid and the more centrist faction of Hillary Clinton supporters in the nation's most populous state.

Although the endorsement involved just a small circle of the most activist voters — a 313-member executive committee in a party that represents 8.4 million voters — many Democratic insiders said it carried potentially dangerous implications for the party beyond the state's borders.

Not only did the internal battle threaten to extend the rift among Democrats in California — a traditional mother lode of campaign contributions — many Democratic leaders, including former state chair Art Torres, worried about the prospect of a circular firing squad.

"We have the opportunity to change the nature and the control of the House," said Torres, a Feinstein backer, adding that a de Leon endorsement threatened that Democrats "won't have enough federal money to put into those congressional campaigns."

"Federal money is the hardest to raise," he said, "and if the party is going to spend money on a U.S. Senate campaign — why do it?"

For de León's campaign, snagging the party's endorsement was widely seen as his last shot at making a serious run at Feinstein. California's senior senator pummeled him by 32 percentage points in the June all-party primary, winning more than 70 percent of the Democratic vote in a contest in which 32 candidates competed.

She has also dramatically outraised him: Feinstein reported $10.3 million cash on hand at the end of March, compared with $672,330 for de León, according to campaign finance reports.

But de León has gained traction among the party's far left as the author of the controversial SB54, the California Values Act, also known as the "sanctuary state" law. The legislation, aimed at curtailing the cooperation of local law enforcement with federal immigration officials, was recently largely upheld by a federal judge's ruling.

De Leon has also called for abolishing the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency and impeaching Trump — a position that is shared by his friend, wealthy Democratic activist Tom Steyer.

In making the rounds this weekend in caucus meetings at Oakland's Marriott Hotel, Feinstein repeatedly reminded Democrats of her seniority in Washington, her legislative leadership on issues like the assault weapons ban, and of what she vowed will be her pivotal role as the ranking Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee — which will weigh Trump's nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.

Feinstein on Saturday downplayed the symbolism of a de León endorsement and her difficulty with the party's grass roots, insisting it would have no effect on her campaign. "This was not a close primary election, and there were 32 people on the ballot," she said of the June contest. "I take nothing for granted ... we work hard."

"I think people understand I'm now ranking on Judiciary, going into one of the biggest moments that this party has — the decisive Supreme Court justice," she said. "This is a very big deal because this affects the life of every American going forward. So who that Supreme Court seat goes to is all-important."

Asked why her decades of accomplishments in public office haven't earned her an easy endorsement from her party in her bid this year, Feinstein jokingly shrugged: "Well, that thought occurred to me — but I wiped it out of my mind completely."

In a measure of the contest's intensity, party members said they were inundated with appeals from both camps in recent days, and Feinstein's call for neutrality irked some pro-de León inhabitants of the party's progressive wing.

"Delegates are very angry at the constant barrage of emails we've gotten from people who have endorsed Dianne Feinstein telling us not to endorse," said R.L. Miller, a prominent environmental activist who was wearing one of a profusion of "United4KDL" stickers.

In caucus meetings and in hallways where he made the rounds, de León argued that Trump's recent actions on immigrant family separations, the Supreme Court and environmental policy demanded unfailingly tough action and confrontation from Democrats in Washington. And — without ever naming Feinstein — he repeatedly drew a sharp contrast with her centrist approach and more conciliatory style on Capitol Hill.

"We need bold leadership in Washington today," de León told a meeting of the Women's Caucus. "Brett Kavanaugh is in a position to take away the rights of every American. ... That's why we have to shut the Senate down — and never allow this individual to come to the Senate floor," he said to cheers. "This is where you need the courage of your convictions — to not be on the sidelines, but on the front lines .... because what's at stake is a generation of power."

Steyer also drew cheers from the Democratic crowd in Oakland when he delivered a similar message to Democratic lawmakers on Capitol Hill: "If you don't have what it takes to lead now, when we are totally under the gun, then don't come asking for support later," he said. "Lead, follow or get out of the way."

Feinstein has appeared to respond to progressive pressures as the campaign has unfolded. She moved left on a pair of issues where her moderation has long stood out in California: she endorsed legalizing marijuana, reversing her longtime opposition, and renounced her prior embrace of the death penalty.

Bill Carrick, Feinstein's campaign strategist, downplayed the importance of this weekend's vote, saying that the opposition of the party's far left to Feinstein is "not a surprise; we've been through this in the past."

Carrick noted that de León "got the lowest total of any candidate" ever in a top-two primary race, while "she won every county, 70 percent of the Democrats, every congressional district of every kind of demographic that exists in California. So I think we're in good shape."

Still, he acknowledged that it would have been "much better for the Democratic Party" to present a unified front as the November election approaches, and to have avoided an endorsement fight.

Despite the passion of progressive voters, he said, a political reality exists even in solidly blue California. "We can't be naïve about these swing districts," he said. "The idea that suddenly we vaporize the Republicans in these districts and just walk in, is just crazy. They're all going to be very, very close districts."

To view online click here.

Back

U.S. ambassador: Trump-Putin meeting 'isn't a summit' Back

By Quint Forgey | 07/15/2018 10:53 AM EDT

President Donald Trump's highly anticipated meeting on Monday in Helsinki with Russian President Vladimir Putin is just that — only a meeting, the U.S. ambassador to Russia said Sunday.

"It isn't a summit. I've heard it called a summit. This is a meeting," Jon Huntsman said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

"In fact, it's the first meeting between the two presidents," Huntsman added. "They've had some pull-asides, one at the G-20 in Hamburg and the other at the APEC Ministerial in Da Nang, Vietnam, but this is really the first time for both presidents to actually sit across the table and have a conversation."

Unlike previous presidential summits — such as Ronald Reagan's visit to China in 1984, Huntsman said — Trump and Putin's get-together in Helsinki will not feature a state dinner, a joint statement or any predetermined policy deliverables.

"You don't know what's going to come out of this meeting, but what it will be is the first opportunity for these presidents to actually sit down across a table, alone and then with their teams, to talk about everything from meddling in the election, to areas where we have some shared interests," Huntsman said.

Huntsman also said recent developments in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, including the Friday indictment of 12 Russian military officials for hacking the Democratic National Committee, will be a part of Monday's talks.

"That now makes probably almost 30 Russians who have been rolled up by the Mueller indictment. That investigation continues," Huntsman said. "The bigger picture is we need to hold the Russians accountable for what they did, their malign activity throughout Europe as well. That's a part of the conversation that needs to take place."

But Huntsman wouldn't say whether Trump would push Putin for the extradition of the dozen Russian military officers to stand trial in the United States.

"I don't know if he'll make the ask, but it may be part of the agenda. It may be part of their bilateral meeting together. We'll have to see," Huntsman said, adding that the FBI office and the U.S. Embassy in Moscow would work to advance that goal.

"That doesn't necessarily mean that the Russians are going to follow through with it," Huntsman cautioned. "But we'll see if those steps will be taken."

To view online click here.

Back

House to vote on whether carbon tax 'detrimental' to economy Back

By Anthony Adragna | 07/13/2018 01:18 PM EDT

The House Rules Committee will meet Tuesday to tee up chamber consideration of a resolution, H. Con. Res. 119 (115), arguing a carbon tax would be "detrimental" to the U.S. economy and "not in the best interest" of the country, according to a notice.

Nineteen conservative groups, including the Competitive Enterprise Institute, American Energy Alliance and Americans for Tax Reform, sent House leadership a letter earlier this week urging them to take up the resolution.

The non-binding resolution is led by Majority Whip Steve Scalise and may be an interesting vote for members of the Climate Solutions Caucus. That bipartisan group's ranks have swelled to more than 80 lawmakers, but members have yet to weigh in on specific solutions for how to address climate change.

WHAT'S NEXT: The Rules Committee will meet on the resolution July 17 at 3 p.m.

To view online click here.

Back

Was this Pro content helpful? Tell us what you think in one click.

Yes, very | Somewhat | Neutral | Not really | Not at all

You received this POLITICO Pro content because your customized settings include: Morning Energy. To change your alert settings, please go to https://subscriber.politicopro.com/settings

POLITICOPRO

This email was sent to bolen.brittany@epa.gov by: POLITICO, LLC 1000 Wilson Blvd. Arlington, VA, 22209, USA