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- [Notable Quotes](#)
- [Back Issues](#)
- [For Journalists Only](#)
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May 16, 2006

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June 23, 2006 | [Back Issues](#)

[« previous](#) |

White House, GOP Leaders Plan All-Out Assault on Federal Protections

Apparently rushing to lock in a long-sought goal before the fall elections, GOP congressional leaders may bring to a vote within weeks a proposal that could literally wipe out any federal program that protects public health or the environment--or for that matter civil rights, poverty programs, auto safety, education, affordable housing, Head Start, workplace safety or any other activity targeted by anti-regulatory forces.

With strong support from the Bush White House and the Republican Study Committee, the proposal would create a "sunset commission"--an unelected body with the power to recommend whether a program lives or dies, and then move its recommendations through Congress on a fast-track basis with limited debate and no amendments.

Three leading proposals have been introduced and are being winnowed into a final version. They would give the White House some--or total--authority to nominate members to the commission. House Majority Leader John Boehner (R-OH) has confirmed that his office is coordinating development of a final version for prompt floor action.

Sunset commissions have been proposed, and defeated, before. But public interest veterans say the current situation is unlike any in the past, because the House Republican Study Committee, which includes some of the most anti-regulatory members of Congress, has secured guaranteed floor consideration of a sunset bill.

If such a bill should become law, the sunset commission could be packed with industry lobbyists and representatives from industry-funded think tanks, and could conduct its business in secrecy. Two of the sunset proposals under consideration would mandate that programs die after they are reviewed, unless Congress takes action to save them.

Mother Jones Feature

In the most recent issue of [Mother Jones](#) the growing consequences of pollution and environmental toxins for the region are highlighted in [Dozens of Words for Snow, None for Pollution](#) by Marla Cone. The article is free of charge to readers of [BushGreenwatch.org](#).

Several environmental programs have been targeted during past sunset attempts. Experts predict those would be among the first a sunset commission would review. Among them: the Energy Star Program; federal support for mass transit; the State Energy Program, which supports numerous state and local energy renewable efficiency programs; the Clean School Bus Program; the Land and Water Conservation Fund; federal grants for Wastewater infrastructure; a national children's health study that examines factors leading to such problems as premature birth, autism, obesity, asthma, and exposures to pesticides, mercury and other toxic chemicals.

A coalition of public interest groups is fighting to block enactment of a sunset commission. Information is available through the [Sunset Commission Action Center](#) at OMB Watch.

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Exxpose Exxon

A coalition of environmental and public interest groups spotlighting ExxonMobil's efforts to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, prevent action on global warming, and encourage America's oil dependence.

Gristmill

Grist Magazine's new blog is the place for continuous commentary from a stable of smarty-pants writers the likes of which the environmental world has never seen.

REP America

View the website for the "environmental conscience of the GOP." This site includes the Campaign for Change: Action Plan for a Green GOP Century.

Environmental Health News

Sign up to receive daily news summaries of environmental health coverage from around the world, in your inbox by 9 am ET.

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