

## **Summary of the Defense of the Environment Act of 1999**

### **What does the Defense of the Environment Act do?**

The Defense of the Environment Act will guarantee an informed and accountable process for environmental measures considered in Congress. The Act would require Congressional Committees to report whether proposed legislation would weaken protection of the environment.

Any Member of Congress may obtain 40 minutes of debate and a vote on any provision which would weaken protection of the environment.

### **Isn't there debate and vote on all legislation?**

No. The vast majority of laws passed by Congress are first considered and voted on by Committee and then voted on by all Members on the floor. Unfortunately, provisions which weaken environmental protection have been added in conference without being considered in Committee and without debate on the floor. Also, restrictive rules can "protect" anti-environmental provisions from being voted on when legislation comes to the floor.

### **Does the Defense of the Environment Act mandate new environmental regulation or prevent reform of existing environmental laws?**

No. The Defense of the Environment Act sets no new environmental policy and prescribes no specific outcome to legislation. Congress may amend or repeal any environmental statute without violating the Defense of the Environment Act. The Defense of the Environment Act would simply encourage an informed debate and an accountable vote.

### **Which businesses will the Defense of the Environment Act affect?**

None. The Defense of the Environment Act places no new burdens on any businesses.

### **Has Congress created similar safeguards for other issues?**

Yes. The 104th Congress applied this approach to unfunded mandates created by the Federal government for states or localities to implement. The 104th Congress created additional procedural protections on other issues. For example, Congress may not increase taxes without a two-thirds majority.

