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House rejects effort to ban polystyrene foam containers in House cafeterias

By Pete Kasperowicz

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/231743-house-rejects-effort-to-ban-styrofoam-containers-in-house-cafeterias>

The House rejected a Democratic proposal on Friday that would have prevented the House from spending appropriated money on polystyrene foam food and beverage containers in its cafeterias.

Rep. Jim Moran (D-Va.) offered this proposal as an amendment to the 2013 Legislative Branch appropriations bill, but Republican opposition led to its defeat in a 178-229 vote. Only 10 Republicans joined Democrats in supporting it.

Moran's amendment is the latest of several Democratic attempts to bring cardboard or other more environmentally friendly containers back to House dining areas. Several times last year, House Democrats complained that Republican control of the House also brought back polystyrene foam containers — often described as Styrofoam — a point Moran reiterated during Friday morning's debate.

"We should be using recyclable and biodegradable products and avoiding polystyrene foam packaging," Moran said. "The House of Representatives is the only place within the Capitol complex to revert back to Styrofoam products."

Moran also repeated the Democratic charge that Styrofoam — Dow Chemical's trademarked name for polystyrene — is unhealthy for consumers.

"Toxic chemicals leak out of these Styrofoam containers into the food and drinks they contain, and thus endanger human health and reproductive system," he said.

But Republicans rejected all of these charges, and argued against the idea that polystyrene is more environmentally sound, because alternative packaging costs more and is more resource-intensive to produce.

"Peer-review studies confirm that foam food and beverage containers, which are recyclable and, by the way, are still used by McDonald's, use significantly less energy and water than their

supposed eco-friendly alternatives," Rep. Ken Calvert (R-Calif.) said.

Rep. Dan Lungren (R-Calif.), who chairs the House Administration Committee, added that there is a recycling program in place that turns polystyrene waste into energy, and noted that one of these processing plants is located in Moran's own district. Lungren chided Moran for apparently wanting to kill off those jobs in his district.

"And yet the gentleman comes before us and says, 'that program you have in my district, doggone it, we just don't want it,' " Lungren said.

The Moran amendment was one of seven considered for inclusion in the legislative branch spending bill, H.R. 5882, which was expected to pass later in the day. By voice vote, members approved language from Rep. Rush Holt (D-N.J.) that would ensure \$200,000 in funding to print new pocket versions of the Constitution for members and staff.

Also by voice vote, the House approved a proposal from Rep. Gregg Harper (R-Miss.) to limit spending on printed copies of the United States Code.

Roll-call votes were needed to handle the remaining four amendments:

- From Rep. Paul Gosar (R-Ariz), to reduce funding for Botanical Garden upkeep by \$1.235 million, reducing funds to 2009 levels. Passed 213-193.
- From Rep. Broun (R-Ga.), to reduce funding for Congressional Research Service salaries and expenses by \$878,000, reducing that account to 2012 levels. Passed 214-189.
- From Rep. Steve Scalise (R-La.), to eliminate all funding for the Open World Leadership Center Trust Fund (OWC), reducing the account by \$1 million and using the funds for deficit reduction. Passed 204-203.
- From Rep. Flake (R-Ariz.), to prohibit funds made available in the bill for Member's Representational Allowances (MRAs), House Leadership Offices or Committee Employee funds from being used to purchase paid advertisements on any Internet site other than an official site of the member, leadership office or committee involved. Failed 148-261.

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