

Salon has a [recent article](#) entitled, “The Worst Anti-Environmental Congress Ever?” The answer is definitely yes. As someone who has lived through the Gingrich and DeLay eras in Congress, I can say without hesitation that the current House of Representatives is far, far worse. A complete listing of anti-environmental votes in the House can be found [here](#).

The riders on the current EPA and Interior appropriations bill tell the tale, as the [LA Times](#) reports:

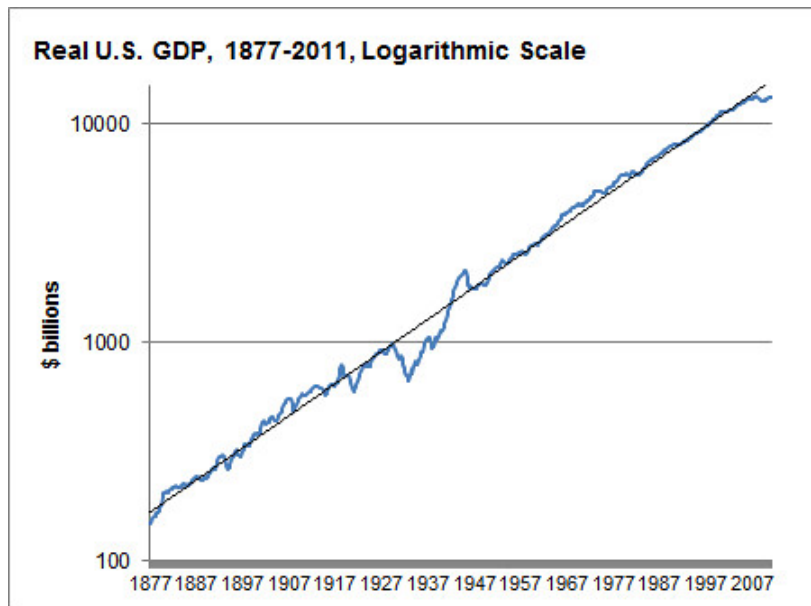
If a moratorium on uranium mining near the Grand Canyon is ended, as one rider proposes, it could potentially result in contamination of the Colorado River, a key source of L.A.’s water. Another rider would block the Obama administration’s most significant environmental action to date, ending plans to set tough fuel-economy rules for vehicles built between 2017 and 2025 — in one fell swoop, this rider would waste billions of barrels of oil, cost consumers money at the pump and worsen air pollution. Other riders would block protections against the environmentally ruinous practice of mountaintop coal mining, forbid the EPA from limiting lung-clogging soot, allow unregulated discharge of pesticides into waterways and delay the EPA from regulating greenhouse gas emissions from power plants and refineries.

The pretext for these attacks on nature and public health is that environmental regulation cripples the economy. According to the [NY Times](#), the views of Idaho Representative Simpson are typical:

The unusual breadth of the attack, explained Representative Mike Simpson, a Republican from Idaho, is a measure of his party’s intense frustration over cumbersome environmental rules.

“Many of us think that the overregulation from E.P.A. is at the heart of our stalled economy,” Mr. Simpson said, referring to the Environmental Protection Agency. “I hear it from Democratic members as well.”

I’ve blogged before about why this view of the economy is so wrong. An easy way to see this is provided by a chart that [Nate Silver](#) prepared for other purposes:



Economic Growth Trends

Environmental regulation got much stronger in the 1970s, retreated under Reagan (especially in his first term), resurged a bit under the first President Bush and then under Clinton, retreated again under the second President Bush. If regulation was a big brake on the economy, you'd expect to see signs of these changes in this graph. But the graph doesn't show anything like that. In fact, growth was above trend until about the time that Reagan took office, and stayed on the trend line until the crash at the end of the last Bush Administration. Where are the fingerprints of EPA regulation in this chart??

Of course, many of the members of Congress who voted for these measures also thought that having the U.S. default on its debt was also a good idea. So I don't suppose a few facts or figures are likely to make much difference in their views. In any event, the effort to destroy our nation's environment seems likely to continue at full throttle.