

My last short post on jobs and regulation turns out to be particularly timely. The House just passed the TRAIN bill, as [E&E](#) reports:

Passing largely along party lines, 249-169, the “TRAIN Act” (H.R. 2401) would delay new U.S. EPA rules for mercury, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, while creating a new Cabinet-level panel to study the cumulative effect of about a dozen rules on the economy (Greenwire, Sept. 23).

The bill was amended to require EPA to consider the cost of a regulation when setting emission limits. Under existing law, the agency must set limits that scientists consider sufficient to protect public health without considering costs.

The measure would give coal-fired utilities a reprieve from rules that some say would lead to the early closure of power plants. Four Republicans voted against the final bill, and 19 Democrats crossed the aisle to vote for it.

As usual, the pretext is the economy:

“The House took responsible action today against a significant threat to jobs and the economy by requiring the administration to assess the true cost of two major rulemakings before imposing them on a fragile economy and a weak job market,” said National Mining Association President and CEO Hal Quinn in a statement. “We urge the Senate to promptly pass the TRAIN Act.”

Bill sponsor John Sullivan (R-Okla.) said the measure is part of the Republican jobs plan.

It’s really heartwarming to see how much the coal industry and its congressional representatives care about the unemployed, although oddly House Republicans don’t approve of any kind of government aid to the jobless. And of course, public health doesn’t count at all in their calculations.

From a political point of view, it’s really interesting to see this melding of special interest legislation with populist appeals to the economy. It’s a little discouraging to see these efforts to increase air pollution, however, if you or your family members happen to have asthma or other respiratory issues, or if you just care about the environment.

