

- > From Congress Daily--
  - > ENVIRONMENT
  - > Western Republicans Seek To Split Votes From Lands Bill
  - > Republican opponents of a landmark resources bill hope to tempt
  - > its supporters
  - > to vote for tantalizing - but controversial - amendments that would
  - > almost
  - > certainly sink the legislation if adopted. During ongoing consideration
  - > of the
  - > Conservation and Reinvestment Act in the Senate Energy and Natural
  - > Resources
  - > Committee next week, Senate Budget Chairman Domenici plans to offer a
  - > provision to permit oil exploration in Alaska's Arctic National
  - > Wildlife Refuge and
  - > a separate amendment to remove bans on oil drilling off U.S.
  - > shorelines. Although
  - > panel members are expected to reject the amendments, a vote could put
  - > the authors
  - > of the \$3 billion conservation bill - Energy and Natural Resources
  - > Chairman
  - > Murkowski and Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La. - in an uncomfortable position.
  - > The
  - > composition of the committee would force Murkowski to oppose new oil
  - > drilling in
  - > Alaska - an idea he has long supported - in order to keep the bill free
  - > of new
  - > controversy. Landrieu, meanwhile, may be compelled to vote against
  - > lifting the
  - > offshore drilling moratoria, a vote that could prove costly to a
  - > freshman Democrat
  - > from a major oil producing state.
  - > A final vote on the legislation is expected Tuesday, although
  - > most of the 27
  - > amendments filed with the committee have not been considered. During
  - > consideration of the bill today, senators again rejected an attempt by
  - > appropriators
  - > to remove special protections enjoyed by the bill's \$3 billion in
  - > spending. Senate
  - > Interior Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Slade Gorton, R-Wash.,
  - > whose
  - > panel oversees conservation spending, sought to remove a "budgetary
  - > gimmick" that
  - > triggers \$2.5 billion in automatic resources spending if appropriators
  - > allocate \$450
  - > million annually for federal land purchases. "The bill is designed to
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> see to it that that  
> money is spent every year," Gorton said. The amendment was defeated  
> 12-7.  
> Murkowski also picked up one or two new GOP votes today. Sens.  
> Jim Bunning  
> of Kentucky and Gordon Smith of Oregon appeared to join Murkowski in  
> support of  
> the bill after the panel considered amendments they supported. The two  
> votes seem  
> to assure that Murkowski will have the support needed to approve the  
> bill next  
> week. Murkowski, faced with strong GOP opposition, first secured  
> unanimous  
> support from Democrats. Now he is working to pick off Republican votes,  
> in part by  
> accepting their amendments. The discussion and vote on Bunning's  
> amendment  
> offered a revealing insight into the strategy. Bunning's amendment,  
> which ensures the  
> bill's spending does not jeopardize progress toward paying down the  
> debt, was  
> roundly criticized by Democrats. But when it came time for a voice  
> vote, not a single  
> Democrat voiced an objection. Once the amendment - and Bunning's  
> support -  
> was safely acquired, Landrieu asked that she be recorded in opposition  
> to the  
> amendment. - by Brody Mullins  
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