

By Pete Kasperowicz -

The House Wednesday evening was poised to approve a continuing spending bill that cuts \$1.5 billion from the Department of Energy's Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing Loan Program, despite Democratic objections that this program helps create U.S. jobs.

The GOP is proposing to cut the DOE program to help give another \$1 billion to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for FY 2011. But Democrats spent much of Wednesday afternoon arguing that that is the wrong cut to make at a time of economic uncertainty.

"The Advanced Technology Vehicle Manufacturing program was started in 2008 to reinvigorate American manufacturing," said House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Norm Dicks (D-Wash.). "To date, this program has awarded \$3.5 billion of credit subsidy to promote energy-efficient advanced vehicles and their component parts."

"The Department of Energy estimates the loan guarantees have created or maintained in total 39,000 jobs in California, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Michigan, Missouri and Tennessee," Dicks said.

"The Advanced Technology Vehicle Manufacturing program, which our Republican colleagues propose to cannibalize, that program stands to add tens of thousands of good paying jobs in an industry that will be critical to our future economic competitiveness," added **Rep. David Price (D-NC)**.

But Republicans were not swayed as they headed toward a vote on the resolution, H.R. 2608. Republicans argue that the DOE program has \$4 billion in unused funds, and would still have \$2.5 billion left if the bill became law. The GOP has also dismissed the idea that these grants are creating any jobs, and that Democrats are counting jobs as "created" if they have any relationship at all to the program.

Democrats also argued that the \$3.65 billion provided for FEMA under the continuing resolution is not enough, and lobbied for the \$6.9 billion Senate Democrats are pushing. But Republicans, including those whose districts have been affected by natural disasters this year, said there is enough funding in the resolution.

"If anyone is interested in sustaining FEMA's disaster relief, it would be me, and I do believe that this bill does the job," Rep. Rob Aderholt (R-Ala.) said.

Once the House bill is approved, it will go to the Senate, where Democrats say they will try to add language increasing FEMA funding. If that works, the two chambers will have to sort out their differences, and Democrats have already warned that a government shutdown may be on the way, or possibly legislative work next week, when Congress was planning to be out.

However, it is still unclear whether the Senate can approve additional FEMA funding.