WASHINGTON — The House voted 255 to 172 on Thursday to halt the Obama administration’s program to regulate industrial air emissions linked to climate change, delivering a rebuke to a central tenet of the president’s energy and environmental policy.

Nineteen Democrats joined in approving a bill that, were it to become law, would bar the Environmental Protection Agency from acting to limit emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that the agency has declared a threat to human health and the environment.

The measure would also nullify a 2007 Supreme Court ruling that gave the agency the authority to issue regulations to curb those emissions.

The bill stands little chance of becoming law because a similar measure voted on in the Senate on Wednesday came up 10 votes short of the 60 votes needed to avert a filibuster. President Obama this week threatened to veto any measure that would hinder the administration’s efforts to restrict emissions that scientists say are warming the atmosphere and leading to potentially devastating changes in the global climate.

Representative Fred Upton, Republican of Michigan and chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, called the vote a victory for American families and jobs as well as a message to the White House that its regulatory agenda was unpopular with many voters.

“Our thoughtful, bipartisan solution reins in an E.P.A. gone wild whose bureaucrats are oblivious to the nation’s economic woes and soaring unemployment,” said Mr. Upton, who co-sponsored the bill with Representative Edward Whitfield, Republican of Kentucky.

On Wednesday, the Senate defeated four amendments that would have permanently or temporarily prevented the environmental agency from policing greenhouse gas emissions, including one measure that was virtually identical to the House bill. That amendment, sponsored...
by Senators Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and James M. Inhofe of Oklahoma, both Republicans, drew four Democratic votes but remained well short of a filibuster-proof majority.

The votes leave Congress deadlocked for now on an issue that has stirred heated scientific, economic and political debate for years.

Republican leaders are pushing to attach similar anti-E.P.A. measures to the current-year budget bill that is now being negotiated. If that fails, they will most likely try again on future spending bills.

Thursday’s vote was in sharp contrast to action two years ago, when a Democratic-controlled House passed a comprehensive climate change and energy bill that would have created a nationwide trading system to rein in carbon dioxide emissions. That legislation died last year in the Senate.

The debate in the House has unfolded along familiar lines this week, with well-rehearsed arguments about the science of global warming and the effects of new environmental regulations on domestic energy prices and jobs.

Republicans said they were trying to stay the heavy hand of officials at the E.P.A. who were imposing costly “job killing” regulations on business. Democrats argued that the Clean Air Act’s limits on air pollutants save tens of thousands of lives and prevent hundreds of thousands of illnesses every year, and that extending those rules to greenhouse gases would slow dangerous climate change.

Mr. Upton said that his bill would allow the E.P.A. to continue to regulate most air pollutants, but that the Clean Air Act never envisioned limits on carbon dioxide, methane or other greenhouse gases produced by thousands of sources around the country.

Representative Ted Poe, Republican of Texas, took the argument further. “E.P.A. is on a mission to destroy American industry,” he said on Wednesday in defending the bill. “When regulators, especially regulators at the E.P.A., go to work, they get in a big room and sit around a conference table drinking their lattes and say, ‘Who can we regulate today?’ because that’s what regulators do. Regulators regulate, all on the so-called premise of protecting us from ourselves.”

Representative Henry A. Waxman, Democrat of California, was a co-author of the 2009 climate bill and the most outspoken opponent of the Upton-Whitfield measure. He called the bill “a divisive, partisan measure that takes us in exactly the wrong direction.”

He said the bill had no chance of becoming law and was merely a time-consuming distraction from the urgent task of reducing fossil fuel use and developing clean-burning alternatives.

“Americans want clean air to breathe and sensible limits on carbon pollution,” Mr. Waxman said.
WASHINGTON — The Senate on Wednesday rejected efforts to block the Environmental Protection Agency’s program to regulate greenhouse gases, defeating four bills that would have limited the agency’s attempts to address global warming.

The Senate voted as the House was debating a measure that would also halt the regulations by repealing the agency’s scientific finding that carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases are endangering human health and the environment. That bill is expected to pass the House on Thursday. President Obama has vowed to veto any such measure if it should reach his desk.

In the Senate, a virtually identical bill sponsored by Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and James M. Inhofe of Oklahoma, both Republicans, was attached to an unrelated small-business bill. The measure drew 50 votes, including 4 from Democrats, but fell shy of the 60 needed to avert a filibuster.

Democratic alternatives that would impose less extreme limits on the E.P.A. regulation drew as many as 12 votes, putting the White House on notice that it risks further party defections unless it moderates the scale and pace of its proposed carbon rules.

Mr. Obama has consistently opposed any effort that hinders the administration’s efforts to restrict emissions that scientists say are warming the atmosphere and leading to unpredictable and potentially devastating changes in the global climate.
The White House welcomed the Senate votes in a statement, saying, “The administration is encouraged by the Senate’s actions today to defend the Environmental Protection Agency’s ability to protect public health under the Clean Air Act.”

It continued: “By rejecting efforts to roll back E.P.A.’s common-sense steps to safeguard Americans from harmful pollution, the Senate also rejected an approach that would have increased the nation’s dependence on oil, contradicted the scientific consensus on global warming, and jeopardized America’s ability to lead the world in the clean energy economy. The Clean Air Act is a vital tool in protecting our families — particularly children — from a wide variety of harmful pollutants that cause asthma and lung disease, and the administration remains committed to protecting this important law.”

Congress thus remains deadlocked on the E.P.A.’s authority to regulate carbon dioxide as a pollutant. But efforts to handcuff the environmental agency are not likely to end here. Republican leaders are pushing to attach similar measures to the budget bill that is now being negotiated by administration and Congressional officials. If that fails, they can be expected to try again on debt ceiling or fiscal year 2012 budget bills.

Mr. McConnell said that the 50 votes for his bill and the Democratic votes for the less draconian alternatives demonstrated a bipartisan majority in favor of thwarting the E.P.A.’s plans to regulate greenhouse gases.

“Alltogether, more than 60 senators voted in favor of four amendments that, to one degree or another, would restrain the E.P.A.’s power to regulate carbon emissions from farmers, manufacturers and power plants,” Mr. McConnell said after the vote. “We in the Senate will continue to fight for legislation that will give the certainty that no unelected bureaucrat at the E.P.A. is going to make efforts to create jobs even more difficult than the administration already has.”

Wednesday's votes came less than two years after the House passed the most ambitious climate change and energy bill ever considered in Congress, a measure that would have created a nationwide trading system to curb carbon emissions. That bill died in the Senate, and opposition to cap and trade became a successful 2010 political platform point for Tea Party groups and their financiers in fossil fuel industries. Nearly all Republicans elected in the midterm election expressed doubt about the science of global warming and opposed regulation of climate-altering gases.

The E.P.A. has begun a program of regulating carbon dioxide emissions that will unfold over the next several years, beginning with the largest stationary emitters like power plants, factories and oil refineries.

The agency is already regulating greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks to be sold over the next five years under an agreement negotiated with states and automakers. The House
bill would allow that program to proceed but bars any future regulations on greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles.