



Construction Industry Round Table

Legislative News

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11/11/09 – House Passes Massive Health Care Bill (220-215)

CIRT members attending the fall conference in Charleston, SC got a first-hand comprehensive review of the various elements, and potential impacts, of the just passed House bill (HR 3962) from the highly regarded expert on the subject, Sally Pipes, President of The Pacific Research Institute and author of “The Top Ten Myths of American Health Care.” Despite clear public opposition, Democrats pushed forward (some may say rushed) and passed their massive health care reform through the House late Saturday night (11/07) by a vote of 220-215. The nearly \$1.3 trillion government-takeover of health care was met with wide bipartisan opposition on the House floor. Thirty-nine Democrats, from across the country, bucked Speaker Pelosi and joined with Republicans to oppose what many believe will be the beginning of a government-run health care system.

The GOP did offer an alternative plan that focused on across state line purchasing, codifying the Hyde language prohibiting taxpayer-funded abortion, making Health Savings Accounts more attractive and accessible, implementing strong medical lawsuit liability reforms, and enabling a state innovation program that would reward states for providing effective health care programs and services – all of which would have actually reduced the debt not raise it! The Republican Substitute failed by a margin of 176-258 (no Democrats joined the Republicans in support). While the Democrats rejected any attempt at including liability reform in the final version (voting down a Motion to Recommit that would have included some provisions to this end 187-247), they did accept one amendment that helped to secure final passage of the bill when after many hours of negotiations, an amendment by Reps. Bart Stupak (D-MI) and Joe Pitts (R-PA) that prohibits federal funding of abortions was finally allowed to be voted on the House floor. The amendment passed 240-194.

Moving forward, one of the central questions is whether the Stupak-Pitts language will be included in the final bill. Despite their promises during debate, many leading House Democrats now say that the pro-life amendment will likely be stripped from the legislation before final passage, enraging pro-life members of Congress in both chambers. This will be a key issue as attention now turns to the Senate. Majority Leader Reid has promised to begin debate on his health care legislation next week, but no one has seen his bill yet. Debate is expected to continue for at least a few weeks and many issues remain outstanding. The Obama Administration is pushing to have health care reform done by the end of the year.