



Construction Industry Round Table

Legislative News

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2/10/09 – Senate Clears Hurdle to Pass “Stimulus” Bill

As anyone following the progress of the “stimulus” package knows, the U.S. Senate cleared a procedural hurdle on Monday (2/09) [Roll Call Vote No. 5] when it voted 61-36 to “end debate” and move to final consideration of the bill H.R. 1 (in other words clearing any potential filibuster), with the support of three Republican Senators. The Senate bill that passed (61-37) today is similar to the House version with respect to overall cost (\$838 vs. \$819 billion) – but vary widely as to precisely how and where the money is to be spent or what portion will go to tax relief (i.e., mostly rebates). For example, the Senate version strips out some \$20 billion in infrastructure spending on K-12/ educational institutions but funds more infrastructure dollars for community health centers jumping from \$1.0 to \$1.87 billion. Meanwhile, the Senate version also includes a \$70 billion “patch” for AMT and almost \$50 billion in other spending that is not in the House version – the list goes on and on. Consequently, there is likely to be some difficult “horse trading” in conference as the two chambers try to reconcile the differences and produce a bill that can hold 60 or more votes in the Senate. The leadership’s desire is to have the final bill presented to the President for his signature well before the end of the month.