



Senate Update – June 23, 2008

Last Week in the Senate

On Tuesday, June 16, 2008, the Senate again brought up the Renewable Energy and Job Creation Act (H.R. 6049) for consideration. The bill had failed to attain cloture the precious week by a vote of 50 to 44. The Senate version of H.R. 6049 includes many of the House- passed provisions as well as a one-year patch for the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) and an extension of the solar-energy tax credit. Republicans in the Senate have expressed concerns with the Democrat's plan to increase taxes to offset the extension of existing tax policy. On June 17, 2008, the Senate again failed to attain cloture on the bill by a vote of 52 to 44. ([Record Vote 150](#))

**Note: The House passed H.R. 6049 by a vote of 263 to 160 ([Roll no. 344](#)) on May 21, 2008. Click [here](#) for the Legislative Digest for H.R. 6049.*

On June 18, 2008, the Senate voted to override the President's veto of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (H.R. 6124) by a vote of 80 to 14. ([Record Vote 151](#))

On June 19, 2008, the Senate began consideration of the House Amendments to the Senate Amendment to H.R. 3221, the Foreclosure Prevention Act. Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) agreed to have a regular amendment process for the consideration of this legislation. Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT), Chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, and Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL), Ranking Member of the Committee, developed this bipartisan legislation which includes the HOPE for Homeowner's Act, an affordable housing trust fund, funds for foreclosure counseling, GSE Reform, \$4 billion in Community Development Block Grants, increase in loan limits, and FHA modernization. A Senate Banking Committee summary of the legislation can be found [here](#).

The Senate has considered two amendments to the bill. The first, offered by Senator Kit Bond (R-MO), would have clarified that Government Sponsored Entities have no responsibility for funding housing entities under the Affordable Housing program. The amendment failed by a vote of 11 to 77. ([Record Vote 152](#)) The second amendment, which was also offered by Senator Bond, would have struck language to create a new Federal Housing Administration (FHA) program called the "HOPE for Homeowners" loan program. The amendment failed on a motion to waive the Congressional Budget Act by a vote of 21 to 69. ([Record Vote 153](#))

Following the consideration of these two amendments, Senator Jim Bunning (R-KY) offered a Motion to Recommit the bill to the Senate Banking Committee with instructions to report what financial benefits Countrywide Financial would receive upon enactment of the legislation. The Motion to Recommit failed by a vote of 11 to 70. ([Record Vote 154](#))

**Note: A group of nine Republicans, led by Senator Jim DeMint (R-SC), sent a letter requesting that Majority Leader Reid delay consideration of the bill until after the allegations against Countrywide Financial can be resolved. Countrywide Financial is accused to giving preferential mortgage rates to Senator Dodd (D-CT) and Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND).*

The Administration issued a [Statement of Administration Policy](#) for the Senate substitute to H.R. 3221 on June 19, 2008, that includes a veto threat of the legislation.

Also of note...

On June 19, 2008, the Senate Finance Committee approved, by a vote of 19 to 2, the Iran Sanctions Act of 2008 (S. 970). Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice wrote to Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) on June 18, 2008, outlining some specific concerns with the legislation. The first is that "the bill will serve to divide the multilateral coalition that has come together to oppose Iran's nuclear program" and the second is that "the current draft includes a provision barring entry into force of the civil nuclear cooperation agreement (123 agreement) which the United States and Russia recently signed, and which we have submitted to Congress."

This Week in the Senate

On Monday, June 23, 2008, the Senate is expected to continue focusing on housing legislation (H.R. 3221). The Senate is also expected to consider the House passed Emergency Troop Funding Supplemental (H.R. 2642) and the FISA Amendments Act (H.R. 6304). According to press reports, it is likely that amendments will be offered in the Senate that would strip the liability provisions from the FISA bill, but these amendments are expected to fail, leaving the bipartisan House-passed bill intact for final passage.