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US HOUSE PASSES HEALTH REFORM LEGISLATION

On Sunday, March 21, 2010 the US House of Representatives passed health care reform legislation by a vote of 219-212. The final votes followed a series of day long measures designed to allow the passage to happen. In the end, the House passed the Senate's health care package that was approved by the Senate on December 24, 2009. The House went beyond that, and by a vote of 220-211 passed the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010 ("Reconciliation Act") that addresses and amends certain pieces of the Senate's bill the House wanted changed. With both the House and Senate having minimally passed the Senate's original version of health insurance reform - the Affordable Care Act - it can now go to the President for signature and become law. The President is expected to sign that bill right away. As a result, based on Sunday's events - national health insurance reform has passed.

Next, the Senate will convene to consider passing the package of fixes the House made to their bill (the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010). In the event the Senate fails to approve the package of fixes from the House, the Senate bill passed on December 24, 2009 and then on March 21st by House - will remain the law of the land.

This week the Senate will begin to review the process of how they will act upon this package of fixes passed by the House. It is believed that the majority in the Senate will work to use what is referred to as a "budget reconciliation" to act upon the House fixes. Under a "reconciliation" vote, only a simple 51 vote majority will be required which bypasses the possibility of a Republican filibuster. In the event that parliamentary rules prevent a reconciliation action, the Senate could try and garner the needed 60 votes or do nothing. In the event they do nothing or are unable to get the 60 votes necessary, the original Senate bill - having been passed by both the House and Senate - would remain law. Some may recall that the original Senate bill (the one that has now passed both the House and Senate) included controversial provisions like paying for the cost for all of Nebraska's Medicaid liability and absorbing costs for special programs for Louisiana.

It is believed that the Senate will work to act upon the House's amended package immediately with the hopes of passage before the Congressional recess that begins at the start of April.

Conner Strong is monitoring these historic developments and will distribute updates and late breaking information as it becomes available. Please visit www.connerstrong.com/healthcare_reform for updates and information about the details of the new law. In the event you have any questions, contact your Conner Strong account representative.