



Legislative Bulletin.....October 19, 2005

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Summary of the Bills Under Consideration Today:

Total Number of New Government Programs: 0

Total Cost of Discretionary Authorizations: \$0

Effect on Revenue: \$167 million decrease over five years

Total Change in Mandatory Spending: \$172 million decrease over five years

Total New State & Local Government Mandates: 0

Total New Private Sector Mandates: 0

Number of Bills Without Committee Reports: 1

Number of Reported Bills that Don't Cite Specific Clauses of Constitutional Authority: 0

H.R. 3971—Medicare Cost Sharing and Welfare Extension Act—as amended (Deal)

Order of Business: The bill is scheduled to be considered on Wednesday, October 19th, under a motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill. On October 6th, the House passed the bill and sent it to the Senate. On October 7th, the Senate amended the bill and passed it by unanimous consent and sent it back to the House. Today, the House is taking up an amendment to the Senate-amended version and sending it back to the Senate.

Note: it is possible that the Senate this morning will consider the proposed House-amended version (summarized below) as a totally new bill (with an “S.” number). If the Senate passes this new S. bill, the House would consider it and not H.R. 3971.

Summary (major changes from the House-passed bill indicated in red-bold or strikethrough below): This legislation:

- Extends through September 30, ~~2006~~ **2007**, the QI-1 program, through which state Medicaid programs help pay the Medicare Part B premiums of low-income seniors. Sets the total allocation amount at about \$33.3 million per month up to the sunset date.
- Extends at level-funds through December 31, 2005, the Transitional Medical Assistance (TMA) program, which continues Medicaid for families leaving welfare for work.
- Extends the Abstinence Education program at level-funds through December 31, 2005.
- Eliminates Medicare and Medicaid coverage of drugs for the treatment of erectile dysfunction. Medicare would be required to stop paying for such drugs on January 1, 2007, while Medicaid would be required to stop paying on January 1, 2006. [This provision is aimed at offsetting the increased costs elsewhere in the bill.]
- Transfers FY2006 funds from the federal unemployment account in the U.S. Treasury to the Unemployment Trust Fund accounts for Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi, as follows: \$15 million for Alabama, \$400 million for Louisiana, and \$85 million for Mississippi, to help pay unemployment benefits.
- Authorizes any state to use its federal unemployment administrative funds to administer unemployment benefit claims for evacuees from disaster states.
- ~~➤ Clarifies that the Katrina-disaster states may be reimbursed from the current federal TANF contingency fund for providing short-term emergency assistance to individuals who evacuated to other parts of the same state in the wake of Hurricane Katrina (current law allows reimbursement for interstate assistance).~~

Additional Background: The health care extensions in this bill are normally included on the TANF extension bills, but were excluded from the last such extension bill for technical and jurisdictional reasons.

Committee Action: On October 6, 2005, the bill was referred to the Ways & Means Committee and the Energy & Commerce Committee, neither of which took public action.

Cost to Taxpayers: Based on a CBO cost estimate for H.R. 3971, as it passed the House on October 6, 2005, the amended bill today would **decrease** mandatory spending by about \$172

million over the FY2006-FY2010 period. The amended bill would also reduce revenues by \$167 million over the FY2006-FY2010 period.

Does the Bill Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government?: No.

Does the Bill Contain Any New State-Government, Local-Government, or Private-Sector Mandates?: No.

Constitutional Authority: A committee report citing constitutional authority is unavailable.

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**H.Con.Res. 252 - Expressing the sense of Congress that the Government of the United States should actively support the aspirations of the democratic political and social forces in the Republic of Nicaragua toward an immediate and full restoration of functioning democracy in that country—
*as introduced (Burton)***

Order of Business: The bill is scheduled for consideration on Wednesday, October 19, 2005, under a motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill.

Summary: The resolution states that it is resolved by the House of Representatives that Congress:

- “strongly condemns the Aleman-Ortega Pact as detrimental to democracy in the Republic of Nicaragua, the future of democracy in Nicaragua, and the stability of the entire region;
- “strongly condemns constitutional reforms passed by the Pact-controlled National Assembly that stripped important executive branch authorities from the Nicaraguan presidency;
- “strongly condemns the Pact-controlled National Assembly’s actions to stack the Nicaraguan Supreme Court with Pact loyalists, some of whom have had their United States visas revoked on the ground of corruption;
- “strongly condemns the Pact-controlled National Assembly’s efforts to remove democratically-elected President Enrique Bolanos on dubious legal grounds;
- “strongly condemns the Pact-controlled National Assembly’s attempts to remove from office senior officials of the executive branch on dubious legal grounds; and

- “supports the efforts of Nicaraguan democratic civil society to create the necessary conditions for free and fair elections.”

The resolution also states that it is the sense of Congress that--

- “it should be the policy of the United States to actively support the aspirations of the democratic political forces in Nicaragua for a full restoration of democracy and the rule of law in Nicaragua, headed by leaders who are committed to democracy and who deserve the trust of the Nicaraguan people;
- “it should be the policy of the United States to work with the international community, including the Organization of American States, to assist democratic forces in Nicaragua to restore full democracy to their country;
- “it should be the policy of the United States to oppose all political elements that continue to subvert Nicaraguan democracy;
- “it is critical that the 2006 elections in Nicaragua are free and fair and provide the winner of the election a clear mandate to govern the country; and
- “the President of the United States, acting through the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, should provide assistance grants to nongovernmental organizations in support of President Bolanos’ call for the international community to assist in and monitor the 2006 election process in order to ensure the integrity of the process” (emphasis added).

Additional Information: The Charter of the Organization of American States, of which the U.S. and Nicaragua are Member States, stipulates that “[t]he peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it.” According to the resolution’s findings, after a revolution 25 years ago, the people of Nicaragua are building a democratic form of government, though “jailed ex-President Arnaldo Aleman and Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) leader Daniel Ortega have entered into an agreement widely known throughout Nicaragua as the ‘Pact’, to control the National Assembly in order to exploit its legislative powers to undermine the Nicaraguan Constitution, the Presidency of Enrique Bolanos, and all institutions of representative democratic governance.” Pactist politicians, the findings note, currently control and dominate the Supreme Court, the Electoral Council, the Comptroller’s office, and the Human Rights ombudsman’s office, and “polls indicate that an overwhelming percentage of Nicaraguans oppose the Aleman-Ortega Pact, and tens of thousands of Nicaraguans took to the streets in the past year to call for an end to the Pact.”

Committee Action: H.Con.Res. 252 was introduced on September 27, 2005, and was referred to the House Committee on International Relations, which took no official action.

Cost to Taxpayers: None.

Does the Bill Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government?: No.

Does the Bill Contain Any New State-Government, Local-Government, or Private-Sector Mandates?: No.

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