



Senate Update – April 14, 2008

Last Week in the Senate

The Senate resumed consideration of the Housing Bill (H.R. 3221) on April 7, 2008. The Senate housing agreement contains several provisions to address the housing crisis, including mortgage revenue bonds, a \$7000 tax credit for homebuyers purchasing homes in foreclosures as a primary residence, and provides a standard deduction for people who pay property taxes. In addition, the bill provides \$150 million for counseling to help homeowners avoid foreclosure and grants military members returning from active duty service additional time before lenders can begin foreclosing on their homes.

**Note: On Tuesday, April 1, 2008, the Senate agreed to invoke cloture on the Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Tax Act of 2007 (H.R. 3221) by a vote of 94 to 1 ([Record Vote 86](#)). The Senate is using H.R. 3221 as the vehicle for the Senate Housing agreement because the Senate bill contains tax provisions.*

The following two amendments were considered by the Senate on April 10, 2008:

- Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) offered a second degree amendment to the amendment offered by Senator John Ensign (R-NV) that would have provided a two-year extension of the renewable energy and energy efficiency tax breaks and would take wind off of the 2-cent-per-kilowatt-hour technologies and put it on the 1-cent list. The amendment failed by a vote of 15 to 79. ([Record Vote 94](#))
- Senator Ensign offered an amendment that would extend tax breaks for renewable energy and energy efficiency for one year. The amendment was accepted by a vote of 88 to 8. ([Record Vote 95](#))

The Senate passed H.R. 3221, as amended, by a vote of 84 to 12 ([Record Vote 96](#)) on April 10, 2008.

Following the final passage of H.R. 3221, the Senate began consideration of the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008 (S. 2739). This legislation is composed of approximately 60 bills that have already passed the House and been approved by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) reached a deal with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to offer a series of amendments to the bill:

- The first amendment offered by Senator Coburn required an annual report detailing the amount of property the federal government owns and the cost of government land ownership to taxpayers. This amendment failed by a vote of 30 to 63. ([Record Vote 97](#))
- The next amendment would have required citizens of each state to approve and periodically renew by referendum any property taken by the Departments of Interior, Energy, or Agriculture. The amendment failed by a vote of 19 to 76. ([Record Vote 98](#))
- The third amendment would have required that Americans within a National Heritage Area are informed of that designation and that government officials must receive

permission to enter private property. The amendment was defeated by a vote of 27 to 67. ([Record Vote 99](#))

- The final amendment would have set aside one percent of any spending appropriated to carry out new authorizations in the bill to be used to pay for the disposal of excess, unused, and unneeded Federal property to offset the cost of the bill. The amendment failed by a vote of 22 to 73. ([Record Vote 100](#))

After defeating the four amendments offered by Senator Coburn, the Senate passed S. 2739 by a vote of 91 to 4. ([Record Vote 101](#))

This Week in the Senate

The Senate will begin consideration of the Highway Technical Corrections Act (H.R. 1195). The House of Representatives passed H.R. 1195 on March 27, 2007, by voice vote. (Legislative Digest for H.R. 1195)