

Senate Passes Revised Stimulus Package, No LIHEAP Support

The U.S. Senate passed, 81-16, a slimmed down economic stimulus package that does not include additional funding for Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance (LIHEAP), due to Republican opposition. The package has been sent back to the House, where it will likely receive quick consideration and go to the President for signature. (As reported by New England Fuel Institute.)

Senate Passes Revised Stimulus Bill, Expanding Rebate Eligibility

After more than a week of partisan jousting, the Senate passed an economic stimulus bill Thursday that would modestly expand eligibility for rebate checks that are intended to promote consumer spending and revive a flagging economy.

The House was poised to clear the bill Thursday night, speeding it to President Bush for his expected signature.

Senate Democrats, thwarted Wednesday in their effort to significantly enlarge the stimulus bill passed by the House on Jan. 29, reluctantly agreed to a Republican amendment making far more limited changes to the measure.

The amendment, adopted by 91-6, expanded eligibility for rebate checks to include low-income senior citizens, disabled veterans and survivors of disabled veterans, who were left out of the House version. It also tightened language designed to prevent undocumented immigrants from receiving checks.

The revised bill was then passed by 81-16.

Democrats fell one vote short Wednesday night in their attempt to advance a more ambitious proposal, which included an extension of unemployment benefits and renewable energy tax breaks, \$1 billion for extra low-income home heating assistance, added tax relief for businesses and several other provisions.

Under the final bill, anyone with at least \$1 of income tax liability last year, or \$3,000 in qualifying income, would receive checks of at least \$300 checks (\$600 for married couples filing jointly.) This group includes low-income wage earners, low-income seniors living on Social Security benefits, veterans dependent on disability benefits and survivors of disabled veterans.

For taxpayers with more substantial income, the maximum rebate would be \$600 for individuals or \$1,200 for married filing jointly.

For both groups, families with children would receive an additional payment of \$300 per child.

Eligibility for the rebate checks would phase out starting at \$75,000 adjusted gross income for individual taxpayers and \$150,000 for married couples.

For businesses, the final stimulus bill would provide enhanced depreciation and expensing intended to spur investments in equipment that can be put in service this year.