



Senate Passes Health Reform Legislation

Today, the Senate passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (H.R. 3590). With the House passing its health reform legislation in November, Congressional leaders now turn their attention to the conference committee to reconcile the differences between the two bills.

Senate Health Bill

Early this morning, the Senate passed the amended version of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act that was introduced by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) in November. (See our November 24, 2009 [For Your Information](#).) Although the House and Senate versions include many similar provisions, there are still significant differences between the bills, particularly in financing health reform. For example, the Senate bill continues to include the “Cadillac Plan” excise tax and an increase in the Medicare hospital insurance tax, while the House bill includes an income tax surcharge on high income individuals. Another key difference is that the House bill includes a public plan, but the Senate bill does not.

For a high level summary of the differences in the bills, please see our [“Health Reform at a Glance”](#) chart. Our updated [video](#) summarizes how the employer and individual mandates work under each bill.

Next Steps

A conference committee will now need to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate bills. The conference agreement would then need to pass in the Senate and House before going to President Obama for his signature.

Conclusion

With this latest action, health reform is coming closer to becoming a reality. Buck’s consultants are available to model the impact of the legislation on employer programs and to answer questions you have on these proposals.

This FYI is intended to provide general information. It does not offer legal advice or purport to treat all the issues surrounding any one topic.