Just In: House GOP Student Loan Interest Rate Reduction Proposal Passes House With Mandated Big Hit To Health Education & Disease Prevention

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The GOP student loan interest rate reduction proposal, HR 4628, just passed the House amidst jeers from the gallery. Just prior to the vote to pass the bill, they voted along party lines to defeat an amendment offered by Rep. Lois Capps (CA-D), that, according to the U.S. House Clerk's Office, would have

> "protect[ed] health insurance benefits for women and children by prohibiting the underlying bill from reducing coverage or raising costs for healthcare benefits offered by insurance companies, including benefits such as contraception, mammograms, cervical cancer screenings, childhood immunizations, and health screenings for newborns."

they They then moved to the underlying bill, and passed it, the final vote was Yeas 215, Nays 195, with a few party defections on both sides.

Here's the bill they passed (unofficial, not yet printed):

> Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
>
> SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
>
> This Act may be cited as the `Interest Rate Reduction Act'.
>
> SEC. 2. INTEREST RATE EXTENSION.
>
> Subparagraph (D) of section 455(b)(7) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087e(b)(7)(D)) is amended--
>
> (1) in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking `2012' and inserting `2013'; and
>
> (2) in clause (v), by striking `2012' and inserting `2013'.
>
> SEC. 3. REPEALING PREVENTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH FUND.
>
> (a) In General- Section 4002 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C.

300u-11) is repealed.

(b) Rescission of Unobligated Funds- Of the funds made available by such section 4002, the unobligated balance is rescinded.

SEC. 4. COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY PAY-AS-YOU-GO ACT OF 2010.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled `Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation' for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

Unless it's blocked by the Senate, and White House pressure, either way it goes for the GOP now, education likely loses, although a compromise may be worked out in a conference committee should one emerge after Senate consideration.

Higher education loses if the GOP manages to prevent the Federal Direct Stafford Loan (FDSL) interest rate from remaining at 3.4%, thereby forcing a doubling to 6.8% for new undergraduate borrowers as of July 1, 2012.

Health education/prevention loses if the GOP allows the FDSL interest rate to remain at 3.4% but, in doing so, forces President Obama and Democrats in the Senate to accept the repeal of the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which seeks to provide prevention and public health programs to improve health care and to help cut health care costs.

Title 42 USC § 300u–11

(a) Purpose
It is the purpose of this section to establish a Prevention and Public Health Fund (referred to in this section as the “Fund”), to be administered through the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Secretary, to provide for expanded and sustained national investment in prevention and public health programs to improve health and help restrain the rate of growth in private and public sector health care costs.

(b) Funding
There are hereby authorized to be appropriated, and appropriated, to the Fund, out of any monies in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated—

(1)for fiscal year 2010, $500,000,000;

(2)for fiscal year 2011, $750,000,000;

(3)for fiscal year 2012, $1,000,000,000;

(4)for fiscal year 2013, $1,250,000,000;

(5)for fiscal year 2014, $1,500,000,000; and

(6)for fiscal year 2015, and each fiscal year thereafter, $2,000,000,000.

(c) Use of Fund
The Secretary shall transfer amounts in the Fund to accounts within the Department of Health and Human Services to increase funding, over the fiscal year 2008 level, for programs authorized by the Public Health Service Act [42 U.S.C. 201 et seq.], for prevention, wellness, and public health activities including prevention research, health screenings, and initiatives, such as the Community Transformation grant program, the Education and Outreach Campaign Regarding Preventive Benefits, and immunization programs.

(d) Transfer authority
The Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives may provide for the transfer of funds in the Fund to eligible activities under this section, subject to subsection (c).

So, the GOP beat goes on . . . Good luck defending *this*, Mitt.

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