

The yeas and nays.

Here's how Maine's congressional delegation voted this week

TARGETED NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON — Here's a look at how area members of Congress voted over the previous week.

Along with roll call votes this week, the Senate also passed the Higher Education Extension Act, to temporarily extend the Federal Perkins Loan program; a resolution to provide further continuing appropriations for the government, through December 22; and a resolution condemning sexual violence against women and children by members of the Islamic State group.

The House also concurred in the Senate amendment to the Higher Education Extension Act, to temporarily extend the Federal Perkins Loan program; passed a resolution to provide further continuing appropriations for the government, through December 22; passed the Strengthening Cybersecurity Information Sharing and Coordination in Our Ports Act; and passed the Combat Terrorist Use of Social Media Act, to require a report on U.S. strategy concerning use of social media by terrorists.

House votes

House vote 1
FINALIZING TRADE BILL: The House has approved the conference report for the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act, sponsored by Rep. Tom Reed, R-New York. The bill would promote fast-track consideration of trade agreements with Asian countries, automate the processing of certain trade documents by the Customs and Border Protection agency, and establish processes for investigating whether foreign countries are directly or indirectly manipulating their currency to subsidize their exports.

A supporter, Rep. Kevin Brady, R-Texas, said it "will level the playing field for Americans and also make it easier for them to compete in a global marketplace," while strengthening the country's ability to enforce its trade laws and combat currency manipulation.

A bill opponent, Rep. Sander M. Levin, D-Michigan, said it weakened laws against human trafficking and would block climate change efforts from being included in future trade agreements.

The vote was 256 yeas to 158 nays. Rep. Chellie Pingree, D-1st District, gave a nay vote, and Rep. Bruce Poliquin, R-2nd District, gave a yea vote.

House vote 2
PRESS FREEDOM IN LATIN AMERICA: The House has passed a resolution, sponsored by Rep. Albio Sires, D-New Jersey, stating support of free speech and freedom of the press in Caribbean and Latin American countries, and condemning government harassment and violence against journalists in the two regions.

The vote was 399 yeas to 2 nays. Both Pingree and Poliquin were among the yeas.

House vote 3
UMBILICAL BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS: The House has concurred in the Senate amendment to the Stem Cell Therapeutic and Research Reauthorization Act, sponsored by Rep. Christopher H. Smith, R-New Jersey. The bill would reauthorize through fiscal 2020 government programs for storing and distributing for transplant umbilical cord blood to patients needing blood infusions.

Smith said umbilical cord blood helped treat more than 70 diseases, including lymphoma and leukemia, and is often the only cure available for senior citizens with those diseases.

The vote was unanimous with 421 yeas. Both Pingree and Poliquin were among the yeas.

House vote 4
BANKRUPTCY AND MILITARY MEMBERS: The House has passed the National Guard and Reservist Debt Relief Extension Act, sponsored by Rep. Steve Cohen, D-Tennessee. The bill would extend by four years an exemption from the means test presumption of abuse for National Guard members and members of the Armed Forces reserves who file for chapter 7 bankruptcy.

Cohen said the members were vulnerable to unscrupulous lenders and payday lenders pushing them into having to seek bankruptcy relief from their debts, and making it easier for them to obtain relief was "a way for our nation to recognize the sacrifices made by National Guard and Reserve members."

The vote was 419 yeas to 1 nay. Both Pingree and Poliquin were among the yeas.

House vote 5
COMBATING HEZBOLLAH: The House has concurred in the Senate amendment to the Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Act, sponsored by Rep. Edward R. Royce, R-California. The bill would require the Treasury Department and State Department to take measures to block financing of the Iran-backed Hezbollah terrorist group and identify all the nations that support Hezbollah.

Royce said Iran used Hezbollah to export violence and bolster efforts to undermine U.S. interests and allies such as Israel, prompting the need to take tougher measures against Hezbollah.

The vote was unanimous with 425 yeas. Both Pingree and Poliquin were among the yeas.

House vote 6
TERRORIST SAFE HAVENS: The House has passed the Tracking Foreign Fighters in Terrorist Safe Havens Act, sponsored by Rep. Frank A. LoBiondo, R-New Jersey. The bill would require the director of National Intelligence to report to Congress estimates of the number of U.S. citizens who have joined terrorist safe havens in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere, the number and national origin of for-



Collins



King



Pingree



Poliquin

eigners in the safe havens, and how many of them have left the safe havens.

LoBiondo said the San Bernardino attack showed the need for more information about threats posed by terrorists coming from the safe havens, information that could help Congress better understand the threats and the best ways to respond to them.

The vote was unanimous with 423 yeas. Both Pingree and Poliquin were among the yeas.

House vote 7
EXTENDING TAX CUTS: The House has passed an amendment to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, that would extend or make permanent an estimated \$622 billion package of tax incentives and tax credits, including the earned income and child tax credits and a credit for business research and development spending. It also would suspend for two years the medical device excise tax included in the

health care reform law.

A supporter, Rep. Kevin Brady, R-Texas, said that by stabilizing the tax code, the amendment would make it easier for individuals and business owners to plan and invest for the future, thereby enabling economic growth.

An amendment opponent, Rep. Sander M. Levin, D-Michigan, said its revenue cuts would weaken funding for a variety of discretionary government programs that help poorer Americans.

The vote was 318 yeas to 109 nays. Both Pingree and Poliquin were among the yeas.

Senate votes

Senate vote 1
ARMY GENERAL COUNSEL: The Senate has confirmed the nomination of

Alissa M. Starzak to serve as the Army's general counsel.

A supporter, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-California, said that in her several years as deputy general counsel at the Defense Department, Starzak gained strong expertise in the Army's legal challenges, including policies regarding harassment and treatment of terrorist detainees, as well as helped prepare the military's annual budget.

Feinstein called Starzak "well suited to provide legal guidance to the secretary and chief of staff of the Army and ensure the Department strictly obeys the law."

The vote was 45 yeas to 34 nays. Both Sens. Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Angus King, I-Maine, were among the yeas.

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Big surge in enrollment lifts Obamacare marketplaces

BY NOAM N. LEVEY
TRIBUNE WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — A big surge of consumers this fall is pushing up enrollment in health coverage offered through the Affordable Care Act, providing an unexpected boost to insurance marketplaces created by the law, according to new data from the federal government.

Through this week, nearly 6 million people have selected health plans for 2016 through HealthCare.gov, the federally operated insurance marketplace that serves residents of 38 states, including Florida, Texas and Maine.

"The more who sign up, the stronger the system becomes," President Barack Obama told reporters at the White House. "That is good news for every American who no longer has to worry about being just one illness or accident away from financial hardship."

Hundreds of thousands of additional consumers have selected plans through marketplaces operated by the remaining states, including California, New York, Connecticut and Maryland.

The strong demand for Obamacare coverage in the law's third enrollment period may further solidify the markets, which are still evolving as insurance companies and consumers continue to adapt to the new health care environment.

And it could help further drive down the nations' uninsured rate, which has plummeted since the health law's coverage expansion began in 2014.

Polls and other surveys indicate some 17 million previously uninsured Americans have gotten coverage through marketplaces, Medicaid and other sources.

Sign-ups from new consumers were even stronger this week, as millions of Americans rushed to reach a deadline to sign up for coverage to begin Jan. 1.

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