

House passes sweeping social, climate bill

By ALAN FRAM
Associated Press



J. Scott Applewhite/AP Photo

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi presides over House passage of President Joe Biden's expansive social and environment bill at the Capitol on Friday.

WASHINGTON — Democrats brushed aside monthslong divisions and pushed their expansive social and environment bill through a sharply divided House on Friday, as President Joe Biden and his party moved closer to capitalizing on their control of government by funneling its resources toward their top domestic priorities.

The House approved the legislation by a near party-line 220-213 vote, sending the measure to a Senate where cost-cutting demands by moderate U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin, a West Virginia Democrat, and that chamber's strict rules seem certain to force significant changes. That will prompt fresh disputes between party centrists and progressives that will likely take weeks to resolve.

Even so, House passage marked a watershed for a measure remarkable for the breadth and depth of the changes it would make in federal policies. Wrapped into one bill are far-reaching changes in taxation, health care, energy, climate change, family services, education and housing. That shows the Democrats' desire to achieve their goals while controlling the White House and Congress, a dominance that could end after next year's midterm elections.

Biden hailed the vote as "another giant step forward" for the country.

"Above all, it puts us on the path to build our economy back better than before by rebuilding the backbone of America: working people and the middle class," he said in a statement.

Democrats gathered in front of the chamber, many arm in arm, as the final roll call ticked down. "Build Back Better," many chanted, using Biden's name for

the measure. Their cheering grew louder as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi gavelled the vote to a close.

Republicans had little to celebrate, but showed some feistiness. "Good luck in the Senate," taunted U.S. Rep. Kat Cammack of Florida.

The House vote also gave Biden a momentary taste of victory, and probably relief, during perhaps the rockiest period of his presidency. He's been battered by falling approval in polls, reflecting voters' concerns over inflation, gridlocked supply chains and the persistent coronavirus pandemic, leaving Democrats worried that their legislative efforts are not breaking through to voters.

"If you are a parent, a senior, a child, a worker, if you're an American, this bill's for you," said Pelosi, underscoring Democrats' efforts to impress the public.

U.S. Rep. Jared Golden of Maine was the only Dem-

ocrat to vote "no."

Biden this week signed a \$1 trillion package of highway and other infrastructure projects, another priority that overcame months of internal Democratic battling. The president has spent recent days promoting that measure around the country.

Final approval of the bigger bill, which had been expected Thursday, was delayed when Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, a California Republican, delivered an eight and one-half hour broadside criticizing Biden, Democrats and the bill, the longest speech ever made in the House. When he finished his remarks near dawn, the House recessed briefly before resuming its work, dozens of members designating colleagues to cast their votes.

Standing and referring occasionally to a binder on his desk, McCarthy shouted and rasped hoarsely at

times. Democrats sporadically booed and groaned as McCarthy glared back, underscoring partisan hostility only deepened by this week's censure of U.S. Rep. Paul Gosar, an Arizona Republican, for threatening tweets aimed at U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a New York Democrat.

McCarthy, who hopes to become speaker if Republicans capture the chamber in next year's elections, recited problems the country has faced under Biden, including inflation, China's rise and large numbers of immigrants crossing the Southwest border. "Yeah, I want to go back," he said in mocking reference to the "Build Back Better" name Biden uses for the legislation.

House rules do not limit how long party leaders may speak. In 2018, Pelosi, minority leader at the time, held the floor for just over eight hours demanding action on immigration. Until McCarthy's speech, hers was the House's longest ever.

Friday's vote came after the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated that the package would worsen federal deficits by \$160 billion over the coming decade. The agency also recalculated the measure's 10-year price tag at \$1.68 trillion, though that figure wasn't directly comparable to a \$1.85 trillion figure Democrats have been using.

The 2,100-page bill's initiatives include bolstering child care assistance, creating free preschool, curbing seniors' prescription drug costs and increasing efforts to slow climate change. Also included are tax credits to spur clean energy development, bolstered child care assistance and extended tax breaks for millions of families with children, lower-earning workers and people buying private health insurance.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Chuck Sams, a former interim executive director of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, received a unanimous vote Thursday from the Senate to become the director of the National Park Service.

Senate confirms Sams as director of National Park Service

East Oregonian

WASHINGTON — The Senate in a unanimous vote Thursday night approved the nomination of Chuck Sams as National Park Service director.

Sams is a former longtime administrator for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation near Pendleton and the former area representative on the Pacific Northwest Electric Power and Conservation Planning Council.

The vote came after U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, went to the Senate floor and asked the Senate to pass the nomination by unanimous consent, according to a press release from Wyden's office.

"Chuck Sams is the right nominee to lead the National Park Service as it addresses these challenges. I know Chuck. He is hardworking. He is committed," Wyden said. "Chuck is a role model in the stewardship of American land and waters, wildlife and history. And now thanks to the Senate's unanimous decision to confirm his nomination, Congress and parkgoers will have someone steady and experienced to rely on in the years ahead."



Protect those who are protecting us.

Get vaxxed.

COVID-19 has killed nearly four thousand Oregonians. And every day, doctors, nurses and other health care workers risk their lives to keep that number from rising. You can help. COVID vaccines greatly reduce your chances of hospitalization. That not only protects you, it protects health care workers and our community. Please get vaxxed today.

colpachealth.org/vax



Columbia Pacific CCO™

Part of the CareOregon Family