

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Unanimously Approves Iran Nuke Review Legislation



Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Corker (R-TN) and Ranking Member Benjamin Cardin (D-MD)

Source: Politico

Our Iconoclast [post](#) title about a denouement today on the P5+1 Iran Nuke agreement review legislation was realized this afternoon in a unanimous Senate Foreign Relations Committee vote approving a compromise measure. The Committee action reasserted Constitutional prerogatives forcing President Obama to relent his opposition. The vote was 19 to 0 based on the compromise language worked out between Committee Chairman Bob Corker (R-TN) and Ranking Member Benjamin Cardin (D-MD). Assenting to the new version of the [Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015](#), originally co-sponsored by embattled New Jersey US Senator Bob Menendez and Sen. Corker, were two Committee Members, [announced](#) GOP Presidential Contenders, Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) and Marco Rubio (R-FL). Corker had not been a signatory to Arkansas Tom Cotton's letter that was sent to the Leaders of the Islamic Republic in Tehran apprising them of the Senate's advice and consent on major treaties and agreements.

This legislative victory preserves the right of the Congress to review changes in the prevailing sanctions against Iran occasioned by the presentation of the Administration of any definitive agreement reached between the P5+1 and Iran by the intended date of June 30, 2015. Iranian Foreign Minister

Zarif announced at a ministerial meeting in Spain today, that negotiations leading towards a possible definitive agreement would start April 21st in Lausanne, Switzerland. US House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) said the House would approve the veto proof measure. A vote on the measure should reach the floor of the Senate shortly, at which time Amendments might be introduced for possible consideration.

A *Tower* report [noted](#):

Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), the chairman of the committee, said that the legislation, which passed 19-0, “absolutely, 100% keeps the congressional review process – the integrity of it – in place.”

The compromise language, which was worked out by Corker and ranking Democratic Sen. Ben Cardin (D – Md.), shortened the amount of time of Congress would get to review a nuclear agreement with Iran from 60 days to 30, and softened some other provisions of the bill.

The bill is consistent with a poll [administration’s longstanding objection](#) to any congressional oversight of a potential nuclear deal with Iran.

The New York Times [reported](#) how quickly Administration opposition to the legislation had folded:

Why Mr. Obama gave in after fierce opposition was the last real dispute of what became a rout. Josh Earnest, the White House spokesman, said Mr. Obama was not “particularly thrilled” with the bill, but had decided that a new proposal put together by the top Republican and Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee made enough changes to make it acceptable.

“We’ve gone from a piece of legislation that the president would veto to a piece of legislation that’s undergone substantial revision such that it’s now in the form of a

compromise that the president would be willing to sign," Mr. Earnest said. "That would certainly be an improvement."

Senator [Bob Corker](#), Republican of Tennessee and the committee's chairman, had a far different interpretation. As late as 11:30 a.m., in a classified briefing at the Capitol, Mr. Kerry was urging senators to oppose the bill. The "change occurred when they saw how many senators were going to vote for this, and only when that occurred," Mr. Corker said.

Mr. Cardin said that the "fundamental provisions" of the legislation had not changed.

But the compromise between him and Mr. Corker did shorten a review period of a final Iran nuclear deal and soften language that would make the lifting of sanctions dependent on Iran's ending support for terrorism.

The agreement almost certainly means Congress will muscle its way into nuclear negotiations that Mr. Obama sees as a legacy-defining foreign policy achievement.

Under the agreement, the president would still have to send periodic reports to Congress on Iran's activities regarding ballistic missiles and terrorism, but those reports could not trigger another round of sanctions.

The Times reported possible floor actions that might resurrect original provisions:

The measure still faces hurdles. Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, fresh off the opening of his campaign for the Republican presidential nomination, dropped plans to push for an amendment to make any Iran deal dependent on the Islamic Republic's recognition of the State of Israel, a diplomatic nonstarter.

But he hinted that he could try on the Senate floor.

“Not getting anything done plays right into the hands of the administration,” Mr. Rubio said.

Senator Ron Johnson, Republican of Wisconsin, abandoned an amendment to make any Iran accord into a formal international treaty needing two-thirds of the Senate for its ratification, but he, too, said it could be revived before the full Senate.

The measure will be brought up for a floor vote later this month and is expected to pass both the Senate and the House in near veto proof form.

It is clear that the victors in this battle are the Republican Majority and concerned Democrats who have been monitoring polls and constituent opinions regarding Congressional Review prerogatives. In retrospect Sen. Cotton's letter and the March 3rd address by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu before a Joint Meeting of Congress alerted Americans to problems with the P5+1 framework for a deal announced on April 2nd despite the objections of President Obama and certain leading Democratic minority members of both the Senate and House. Perhaps the diktats announced last Thursday by Ayatollah Khamenei demanding the lifting of all sanctions upon signing of an agreement and denial of intrusive IAEA inspections of military nuclear weapons development sites conveyed to Senate Democrats that there were different opinions about the two Facts Statements. The one released by the State Department versus that of the Iranian Foreign Ministry. Add to that was Monday's removal of a 2010 moratorium on the sale of an advanced Russian S-300 air defense system to Iran an indication that President Putin and Ayatollah Khamenei could void weapons sanctions agreements at will. The losers in this episode are Secretary Kerry and President Obama. How those negotiations go starting April 21st

will determine if Congress will have anything to review on June 30th.