

Important Information You Need to Know About the Tick Act

Explanation of Tick Act Changes From the Lyme Disease Association & How To Help

On October 31, the Senate Tick Act (Collins ME) was passed out of the Senate HELP Committee; however, it was a different bill than the one submitted to the Senate Committee that many Lyme groups supported. The HELP committee replaced it in its entirety with a Manager's Amendment, submitted "in the nature of a substitute," which still keeps the same bill number (S-1657), and the name was changed to the Kay Hagen Tick Act.

The Tick Act bill is NOT and was NOT ever a specific Lyme & tick-borne disease (TBD) bill. It is a vector-borne disease bill, meaning that mosquito-borne diseases such as Zika and West Nile virus as well as other vector-borne diseases are included and will get money. However, there were safeguards in the original bill that would have made clear in the bill's intent that it was focused on Lyme/TBD. Those safeguards have been removed. The LDA was not aware of the bill substitution and found out almost a week after passage through committee and has spent time assessing the impact and weighing actions to take. The new bill substitute will now be presented to the full Senate & its new language will have a significant impact on what the bill does.

1. Language in original Bill: In the 2 authorization of monies sections, the bill says: "amounts appropriated shall be allocated under this section to diseases in a manner that proportionately matches the disease burden of these diseases in the US, which shall be reassessed and adjusted annually."

The language above in quotes was removed in both areas of the

new bill substitute.

- **Purpose of Language:** “Burden of disease” means the amount/impact of each disease covered by the bill. The higher the disease burden, the more money it would get—annually reassessed. The language was a safeguard we had put in to ensure Lyme disease received the share of the monies it deserved. For example, in 2017, Lyme had 42,700+ CDC reported cases, (427,000 if number adjusted for underreporting by a factor of 10). None of the other diseases were even close but Lyme could receive less money, depending on the strength of their lobbying/connections they have.
- **Problem:** The major safeguard for Lyme getting an appropriate share of monies has been removed. Zika and West Nile, which have received disproportionate funding for years, could get a large percent of the monies as could lesser burden tick-borne diseases.
- Included in the language removal above is the phrase “diseases in the US.” Removing that has opened the door to monies going toward other vector-borne and tick-borne diseases outside the US, including for vaccine studies, something which has already occurred in other government programs, while US TBD continue to suffer from lack of funding.

-----**2. Language in original Bill:** The word Lyme was included 30 times in the original bill.

The word Lyme appears once in the new bill substitute, in the one line purpose.

- **Purpose of Language:** The repeated use of the word Lyme provided an emphasis on that disease and bolstered the intent of the original legislation. It was primarily a Lyme bill.
- **Problem:** “Lyme” now only appears in the one line, Purpose, which is not included in the body of the bill so does not

really carry the weight of the bill. In some places where “Lyme” was removed, it was replaced with “vector-borne diseases, including tick-borne diseases.”

3. Language in original Bill: Original bill designates a section “National Strategy and Regional Centers of Excellence in Tick & Vector-Borne Diseases.

New bill substitute designates the section “National Strategy and Regional Centers of Vector-Borne Diseases.”

Purpose of Language: The addition of “Tick and” to the Centers’ title reinforced the intent for the Centers to address Lyme and tick-borne diseases.

Problem: These Centers of Excellence have been in existence since 2017, not established through legislation—the purpose has been primarily vector-borne diseases, i.e., mosquito-borne diseases. The centers would now be “codified” through this legislation, which has no safeguards for distributing monies through the burden of disease nor does the bill even have a strong “intent” toward Lyme disease. Also, the original bill included under the Centers’ section-specific strategies to address Lyme/TBDs, strategies which would help to solve the problems of the past. Now only general strategies applicable to VB are included.

Although there are other changes, we are trying to have the main safeguard for Lyme funding to be put back in the Senate bill, in particular, the phrase “amounts appropriated shall be allocated under this section to diseases in a manner that proportionately matches the disease burden of these diseases in the US, which shall be reassessed and adjusted annually,” or a comparable safeguard(s). That can be done if the bill goes to the floor of the Senate where amendments can be offered. However, we understand this bill is being “hotlined,” called up to pass without a vote, by unanimous consent, unless

a Senator objects. We are working with Senator Collins' office to try and reinstate safeguards for Lyme into the Senate version.

ACTION NEEDED NOW!

We are continuing to work with Congressman Smith's office since the House of Representative's version of the Tick Act, HR 3073 (Smith NJ), still contains ALL the safeguard language that the original Senate bill had in it but which has now been removed by the Senate.

We want to ensure that the HR 3073, Tick Act, gets more House co-sponsors on board so that we have another possible route to passage of the Tick Act. We need your help now to get more co-sponsors on the House bill, HR 3073. Click [HERE](#) for actions you can take to call your Congressperson.

LINKS TO THE TICK ACT BILLS' LANGUAGE:

To see the House bill, HR 3073, Tick Act, [click here](#).

To see the original version of the Senate bill, S-1657, [click here](#).

To see the changed version of Senate bill, S-1657, Kay Kagan Tick Act, that was passed through the HELP Committee, [click here](#).