

Learning about Legislation #12 - Glossary - “Conference”

[With this edition of Learning about Legislation, we have introduced a companion [Glossary of Legislative Terms](#). From time to time, the weekly Learning about Legislation brief will update the glossary with a new definition.]

This week the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1, what has been commonly referred to as “the GOP tax plan.” While the House was debating their bill, the Senate announced that they had been working on a tax plan too, and their version contained considerable differences. For example, the House version of the bill contains a section changes the current deduction for state and local property taxes (SALT), capping that deduction at \$10,000. In what we know of the Senate version that is under debate, the SALT deduction will be eliminated entirely. We also know that the Senate has introduced a provision that would eliminate the “Obamacare” individual mandate that people carry health insurance, whereas that topic is not addressed in the version of H.R. 1 that passed the House. So what happens? If the Senate passes a different version of H.R. 1, the bill will go to conference.

[LexisNexis](#) defines conference as a process where “the leadership in both Chambers appoints conferees to meet in conference. Conferees usually come from the Chamber's committee with jurisdiction over the original bill, although someone who successfully offered a major amendment to the bill also might be appointed a conferee. The conferees negotiate a resolution of the differences in the two versions of the bill, producing a compromise version that must be accepted without change by both Chambers before it can be sent to the President.”

That means that House Speaker Paul Ryan, members of the House Ways and Means committee including Chairperson Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ), Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, members of the Senate Budget committee including Chairwoman Sen. Diane Black (R-TX), members of the Senate Finance Committee including Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and possibly Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) will gather to hash out the differences between the two version. It is also possible that Senators Bob Corker (R-TN) and our own Pat Toomey (R-PA) might be included, as they each represent the two major Republican schools of thought in the finance committee - the deficit hawks and the corporatists. As their negotiations led to the agreement that paved the way for the \$1.5 trillion in cuts to safety net programs, they might be invited to the conference table. Once the Houses come to an agreement, they would return to amended and agreed-to version to the floor of both Houses, and vote on that version before it would go to the President to be signed and enacted. For us, that means there is still time - should we be opposed to the provisions of this proposed tax plan - to protest this bill.