

Medical Bill Veto Upheld in House By 5-Vote Margin

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9/13/73

President Nixon narrowly won a major test of strength with Congress yesterday as the House upheld his veto of an emergency medical services bill by a five-vote margin.

The vote was 273 to 144 in favor of overriding the veto, but that was five votes short of the two-thirds, necessary. Six Democrats joined 138 Republicans in voting to sustain the President.

A swing by 31 Republicans to the President's side was the decisive factor. On passage of the bill in July 75 Republicans voted for it, but yesterday only 46 Republicans voted to override (along with 227 Democrats).

The vote left the President's 1973 veto record unblemished: five bills vetoed, no vetoes overridden.

This was the President's first test with Congress since the August recess, during which the President launched his Watergate counterattack, accusing Congress of neglecting its duties because of Watergate and of busting the budget with spending bills.

Both sides pulled out all the stops for the vote. House Speaker Carl Albert called it the year's best chance for Democrats to override a veto, and said a loss would make it more difficult to override the minimum wage bill veto in a vote coming up soon.

Albert warned against "letting the White House call the shots," and declared, "The reputation of the House of Representatives is at stake—I think we should stand up and be counted for our people."

The Democrats caucused yesterday to hold their troops in line, and lobbyists for the bill, including unions, veterans' groups and the League of Cities, worked up to the last minute.

The administration, for its part, exerted pressure by inviting 95 congressmen, including some Democrats, to the White House Tuesday night.

The bill, besides providing some \$185 million over three years for grants to improve emergency medical services,

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