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John E. Sununu

111 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING • WASHINGTON, DC • 202-224-2841 FAX: 202-228-4131
WWW.SUNUNU.SENATE.GOV



PRESS RELEASE

SUNUNU, JOHNSON: MARKETPLACE DEMANDS INSURANCE REGULATORY REFORM

**Senators re-introduce "National Insurance Act" to respond to the needs of
America's insurers and consumers**

Contact: Barbara Riley/Jeff Grappone
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WASHINGTON, DC - United States Senators John Sununu (R-NH) and Tim Johnson (D-SD) have reintroduced landmark legislation to bring uniformity and predictability to how life and property/casualty insurance is regulated. Under their bill, insurers operating under multiple state jurisdictions could choose to be regulated at the national level under a new "Optional Federal Charter." Providing this alternative stands to reduce the cost and improve the delivery of insurance products.

Sununu and Johnson, members of the Senate Banking Committee, introduced similar legislation last year, using the dual-charter system in the banking industry as a model. The Committee held two hearings examining insurance regulation in 2006 and is expected to revisit the issue.

"America's \$5 trillion insurance industry operates in a global marketplace, highlighting the importance of a clear, consistent regulatory framework. The fragmented system currently in effect has no place in a modern economy. Given the needs of insurers, it inevitably must be modernized," said Sununu. "This legislation provides a choice for insurers if they wish to become chartered at the national level, enabling them to work under a uniform set of regulations and an effective federal regulator. Some institutions may choose not to do so, and this bill does not weaken or undermine the current state system for these firms."

Sununu continued: "Our bill recognizes the clear direction the marketplace is taking. Since last year, the question has become not whether an optional federal charter should be implemented, but when. Consumers will be the ultimate beneficiaries of this approach, enjoying more choices from companies that compete for their business by introducing new products, innovating in the marketplace, and acting in a way that responds quickly to their needs."

Senator Johnson said: "Insurance regulation is not a simple issue, and therefore, there is no simple solution. That said, there is increasingly widespread consensus that the status quo for insurance regulation is unacceptable. I am pleased to be reintroducing with Senator Sununu the National Insurance Act of 2007, a bill that we believe is the right and reasonable approach to insurance regulation modernization."

"Insurance companies both small and large, agents and brokers, and most importantly, consumers, should all have the benefit of a system of regulation that allows the greatest choices and the greatest protections, and fosters competition. Insurance companies, whether they are local, regional, national or global must be able to grow, compete, and offer innovative services," Johnson said. "There is no reason why this country's insurance industry, its agents, brokers and consumers they serve should be hamstrung by a system of regulation that is redundant, inefficient, burdensome, complicated, and costly."

Johnson added, "Since Gramm-Leach-Bliley, Congress has modernized the regulatory schemes for every part of the financial services industry except insurance. We have a responsibility to promote a balanced regulatory system that will allow the insurance industry to meet the highest standards of performance, innovation and progress; I believe the National Insurance Act of 2007 will achieve this."

Aside from technical and clarifying changes, the primary update to this bill - in comparison to the legislation introduced last year - is the inclusion of provisions that would add surplus lines of insurance as a type of insurance that a person with a Federal producer's license would be authorized to sell under the Federal charter program.

The following groups have expressed support for the National Insurance Act: the Agents for Change, the American Bankers Association, the American Bankers Insurance Association, the American Council of Life Insurers, the American Insurance Association, the Council of Insurance Agents and Brokers, the Financial Services Forum, the Financial Services Roundtable, the Life Insurers Council, the National Association of Independent Life Brokerage Agencies, and the Reinsurance Association of America.

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OUTLINE OF NATIONAL INSURANCE ACT (NIA) OF 2007

Optional Federal Charter and Regulation

Establishes a parallel, federal system of regulation and supervision for insurers and insurance producers (agents and brokers), similar to the dual banking system. Insurers and producers are free to elect federal or state regulation, charters and licenses. States would maintain responsibility of regulating state licensed insurers and producers.

The Office of National Insurance

An independent Office of National Insurance is created within the Department of the Treasury, similar to the OCC and OTS, and its Commissioner would be appointed by the President for a five-year term, subject to the advice and consent of the Senate.

National Life Insurers and National Property and Casualty Insurers

The NIA authorizes the chartering of two different types of insurance companies: National Life Companies and National Property and Casualty Companies. The underwriting of life insurance and P/C insurance is separated, but a holding company is permitted to own both a National Life Insurer and a National P/C Insurer.

National Agencies and Federally-Licensed Producers

The NIA authorizes the chartering and licensing of National Insurance Agencies and the licensing of federal insurance producers. A National Agency would be authorized to sell insurance for any federally chartered or State licensed insurer. A federally licensed insurance producer could sell insurance, including surplus lines of insurance, in any State on behalf of any National Insurer or a State Insurer. Additionally, a State licensed insurance producer could sell insurance on behalf of any insurer, including National Insurers, operating within the State in which the producer holds a license.

Conversions Between State and Federal Status

State licensed insurers would be free to convert to a national charter. Likewise, National Insurers would be free to convert to a State charter.

Applicable State Law

The activities and operations of federally chartered and licensed entities would be primarily subject to federal law. However, National Insurers and federally licensed insurance producers would be subject to certain categories of State law. These categories include: (1) State tax laws; (2) State unclaimed property and escheat laws; (3) State laws related to participation in assigned risk plans and other mandatory residual market mechanisms that are designed to make insurance available to those unable to obtain insurance in the voluntary market; and (4) State laws that provide for compulsory coverage of workers' compensation or motor vehicle insurance.

Regulatory and Supervisory Powers

The Commissioner has a comprehensive set of supervisory and regulatory powers. National Insurers are subject to examinations every three years, and National Agencies and federally licensed producers are subject to examination in response to a complaint or evidence of a violation of the law or regulations. National Insurers are subject to risk-based capital standards, investment standards, and asset and liability valuation requirements that are based upon model laws and regulations developed by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC). National Insurers are subject to an independent audit committee requirement, limitations on dividends, and limitations on transactions with affiliates.

Enforcement Powers

The Commissioner is given enforcement powers patterned after those available to the federal banking agencies, permitting him/her to: (1) revoke or suspend a charter or license; (2) issue a cease and desist order, including an order that mandates affirmative actions, such as the sale of assets or the hiring of new management; (3) remove or suspend individual officers, directors, controlling shareholders, agents and consultants; and (4) impose civil fines of up to \$1 million a day for violations of law or regulations or improper conduct.

Consumer Protection

There is established a Division of Consumer Protection within the Office of National Insurance. The Commissioner is directed to issue market conduct regulations to prevent unfair methods of competition and unfair and deceptive acts and practices by National Insurers, National Agencies and federally licensed insurance producers. At a minimum, these regulations must address the advertising, sale, issuance, distribution and administration of the insurance policies and products of National Insurers, as well as claims under such policies and products. The Commissioner is directed to establish a Fraud Division within the Office, and makes the commission of a "fraudulent insurance act" a federal crime. The NIA subjects National Insurers to federal antitrust laws.

Self Regulatory Organizations

The Commissioner is authorized to register and oversee self-regulatory organizations for federally chartered and licensed insurers, agencies and producers. Key powers of the Commissioner, such as chartering and merger and conversion determinations, may not be delegated to a self-regulatory organization.

Receiverships for Rehabilitation or Liquidation

The Commissioner may place a National Insurer into receivership for rehabilitation or liquidation for a number of circumstances, including the insolvency of a National Insurer. The Office of National Insurance must be appointed as the receiver, and as a receiver, the Office is given all of the powers of the Insurer. The Commissioner is directed to issue regulations governing receiverships that are based upon the Uniform Receivership Law adopted by the Interstate Insurance Receivership Compact Commission in September 1998.

Guaranty Fund

Additionally, National Insurers, as a general rule, must belong to the State guaranty associations in each State in which they offer insurance. These associations assume obligations to policyholders, up to certain limits, when an insurer is placed into receivership. If a State guaranty association does not provide policyholders with a level of protection equivalent to NAIC model standards, a National Insurer must join the National Insurance Guaranty Corporation (established under the NIA) which would provide such protections to policyholders. The Corporation would

have separate accounts for life insurance and property and casualty insurance, and similar to State guaranty associations, would be post-funded with assessments of its member companies.

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