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Bipartisan vote boosts Iran sanctions bill

By a strong bipartisan vote, the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee on Thursday approved legislation that would impose new sanctions on Iran if it does not agree to limit its nuclear program by the June 30 deadline set by international negotiators. The committee voted 18-4 to approve the bill by Sens. Mark Kirk, R-Ill., and Bob Menendez, D-N.J., on the understanding that it will not go to the floor before March 24, the self-imposed deadline negotiators have set to reach a political framework for a final agreement. Six Democrats joined all 12 Republicans in voting to approve the bill. According to a draft of the bill, if no final agreement is reached by the June 30 deadline, sanctions that had been waived as part of an interim deal would be reinstated on July 6 and additional sanctions would be imposed, starting with tighter restrictions on Iran's access to markets for its oil.