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Senate Votes on Ryan White Act

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The Senate recently approved the reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act, a $633 million program named after a young Indiana hemophiliac who acquired HIV from a blood transfusion. Jessie Helms (Republican-North Carolina) lobbied against the reauthorization, criticized homosexuals, and called the AIDS prevention programs "thinly veiled attempts to restructure values of American families in favor of the homosexual lifestyle." Although Helms was defeated on the reauthorization issue, he did win some minor victories, including unanimous approval of a provision for optional attendance at federal workplace AIDS prevention programs. The Senate also approved a Helms proposal that prohibits the use of any Ryan White funds to promote homosexuality or intravenous drug use.

The Ryan White CARE Act expires at the end of September, unless it is reauthorized by Congress. The House will consider its version of the act in September, shortly before spending bills for the coming fiscal year are passed. Specific appropriations will be determined during the budget-making process, rather than in advance, as was the case in the current bill.

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