

Senate Committee Passes Flood Insurance Bill

WASHINGTON

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Senate committee OKs flood without considering wind insurance

By Maria Recio, The Sun Herald

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Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. and Sen. Mel Martinez, R-Fla., dropped their plans to amend the bill with a wind provision when it became clear that the chairman, a ranking Republican, and others from non-coastal states, opposed it.

"We weren't going to get it through," said Martinez afterwards. "We're going to try and do something on the floor." The Florida Republican said that he was disappointed "but I never had my hopes extremely high."

Senate Banking Committee Chairman Chris Dodd, D-Conn., said during the "mark-up" of the bill that he had concerns about the costs of adding wind coverage. "There problem here is we don't know the implications of that," he said. Dodd prefers to rely on the findings of a study commission, already approved by the panel, to look at all-perils coverage.

"It's a very legitimate issue," said Dodd of wind damage. "We couldn't answer the implications of cost."

Sen. Minority Whip Trent Lott, R-Miss., who lobbied banking panel members, said he would continue to press for wind coverage in the flood insurance legislation. "We're going to assess if we can even get it up for consideration,"

said Lott. "I'm interested in results."

Wind damage is an explosive issue that has roiled coastal communities since Hurricane Katrina.

The House passed a flood insurance bill last month 263 to 146 that included the "multi-peril" provision giving policy holders the option to purchase wind coverage.