

**S.C. leaders unite on bailout**

House members OK financial rescue bill

By James Rosen · The Herald  
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WASHINGTON — Rep. Gresham Barrett jumped on board the bailout express Friday as all six House members from South Carolina helped Congress pass a \$700 billion financial rescue bill.

The House voted 263-171 for sweeping legislation to authorize the U.S. Treasury to buy or insure bank assets whose values have plunged in the country's economic turmoil.

“We have come up with an incredible piece of legislation that addresses not just Wall Street, but Broad Street, where all the automobile dealerships are located in my hometown,” House Majority Whip James Clyburn told reporters after the historic vote.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi praised Clyburn, a Columbia Democrat, and House Budget Committee Chairman John Spratt, a York Democrat, for helping to pass a controversial measure that the House had rejected four days earlier.

“Our message to Wall Street is, ‘The party is over,’” Pelosi said. “We were dealt a bad hand, but we made the most of it.”

Among 21 states with at least four Republican House members, South Carolina was the only one in which all GOP representatives voted for the bailout measure.

The S.C. Republicans — Reps. Joe Wilson, Henry Brown, Bob Inglis and Barrett — joined Democrats Clyburn and Spratt in giving the state's congressional delegation a clean sweep of approval for the rescue plan.

In the House as a whole, 172 Democrats voted for the bailout bill and 63 opposed it, as Clyburn delivered almost three-quarters of his party's caucus. Sixty-three Republicans voted for the legislation, with 108 rejecting it.

There were 32 more Democratic votes and 26 more Republican votes for the measure than it drew Monday.

The Senate passed the bill Wednesday, with Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham voting for the bailout and GOP Sen. Jim DeMint opposing it. Barrett, a Westminister Republican, opposed the bill Monday but backed it Friday after significant changes were made, including extension of \$108 billion in tax credits and a hike in federal insurance of bank deposits from \$100,000 to \$250,000.

“This is a better bill, but it’s tough out there,” Barrett said on the House floor. “No matter what we do or what we pass, there are still tough times out there. People are hurting. People are mad. I’m mad.”

Indeed, even as President Bush hailed the legislation’s passage and quickly signed it into law, there was more bad economic news. The economy shed 159,000 jobs in September, according to the Labor Department.

“Jobs are not the only thing Americans across this country are losing,” Clyburn told his House colleagues. “They’re losing their hold on the American dream. That dream is upward economic mobility and home ownership.”

Spratt predicted that the bailout’s eventual cost “should be far less” than the \$700 billion authorization because some of the depressed loans and other debt purchased or insured by the government will regain value in the future.

“I will vote for this bill because I believe it is necessary, and I believe that the cost of doing nothing could be catastrophic,” Spratt said. President Bush quickly signed the legislation into law.

Barrett, who has gubernatorial ambitions, agonized over his vote.

“It’s our job to lead,” he said. “If we don’t solve these problems ... America will fail. I asked the good Lord to give me the guidance and wisdom to make the decision.”

Clyburn, the highest-ranking congressional black member and the No. 3 leader of the House, said the economic downturn has hit minority Americans especially hard.

Clyburn said more than one-third of all subprime mortgages issued between 2004 and 2007 went to black homeowners, and that nearly two-thirds of those loans have reset to higher rates.

“These dynamics are devastating to minority communities,” Clyburn said. “I believe that we must pass this legislation in order to stop the hemorrhaging.”