

THE HOUSE WILL VOTE TO ELIMINATE HEALTH INSURANCE'S ANTI- TRUST EXEMPTION NEXT WEEK

I just got off a conference call with Speaker Pelosi. While she had a lot of optimistic things to say about the passage of a Senate plus sidecar bill, the big piece of news is that the House will pass (meaning, I presume she has the votes) a bill eliminating the anti-trust exemption for insurers and medical malpractice companies next week.

As she pointed out, the insurers have had this exemption for 65 years, and “the result has not been good” for consumers. And the only other industry that has been given such an exemption is major league baseball.

She said that, among other things, eliminating the exemption will allow the federal government to investigation collusion and price-fixing among insurers.

I presume this is one of those bills designed to force Republicans to vote to protect the insurance industry—and as such, it is good politics. I’d be even happier if there were any prospect of it getting passed in the Senate, which I doubt. It would be nice to have on more piece of leverage to exercise with the insurance industry.