

Asbestos Firms and Insurers Agree on Contributions to Fund

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Asbestos companies and insurers have agreed on the amount of money they would contribute to a proposed trust fund to settle claims from workers suffering illnesses related to asbestos, the Reuters reports.

Under the proposal, insurers would contribute \$46 billion to a \$114 billion trust fund and manufacturers would cover most of the rest, according to Reuters. Before the agreement, the companies and insurers had been squabbling over each side's contribution to a proposed trust fund that would end claimants' rights to take their cases to court.

Labor groups will review the proposal and offer their opinions before the Senate considers the proposal. Initially, labor groups expressed skepticism over the proposal because they say the proposed fund is too small to cover all of the claims, Reuters reports.

"We haven't been involved in any of these discussions. We'll keep an open mind, but it's extremely unlikely at this point that anything will be worked out," say Jonathan Hiatt, general counsel to the AFL-CIO.

Senate Republican Leader Bill Frist bartered the deal after a proposal from Sen. Orrin Hatch, a Republican from Utah, appeared to be losing support, according to Reuters.