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USMCA Faces Democratic Opposition in the House Despite Hopes for Ratification by Year's End

The Trump administration is expected to submit the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), a government-managed trade deal, to Congress sometime after September 1, with hopes for ratification by the end of this year. As is usual in Washington's contentious political climate, differences between what the White House wants and what the Democrat-run House of Representatives wants could complicate that hope, even killing the deal for now.



Unfortunately, neither side in the ratification debate bothers to address the most important issue concerning USMCA, or any of these multilateral managed trade deals — the effect on America's national sovereignty.

These deals are cast as “free trade” agreements, giving the appearance that they have something to do with “free enterprise.” The truth is that USMCA, like NAFTA, which it would replace, are government-managed trade deals, rather than examples of laissez-faire. They necessarily create new governmental structures above that of national governments, including the U.S. government and the governments of our 50 states, with a corresponding loss of our nation's ability to conduct its own affairs.

It is both fortunate and unfortunate that Democrats are not yet on board with USMCA. This is fortunate in that without the votes from a significant number of Democrats in the House of Representatives, the deal cannot get through Congress. But it is unfortunate because the changes sought by the left-leaning Democrats would make USMCA even worse than it is now — and it is bad enough as it is.

The Democrats want any trade deal with Mexico and Canada to reflect their desire to impose more government regulations on businesses and attain provisions favoring their goals in the way of environmentalism (CO₂ limits), labor unions (making it easier to force unions on workers), and other issues dear to their “progressive” agenda. The deal already has provisions on these issues — USMCA would place all three countries under the control of the International Labor Organization (ILO) by specifically committing them to the ILO's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.

The problem for the Democrats is that they contend the USMCA does not go far enough in adopting more government control over private business.

Another factor in Democrat reluctance to sign off on USMCA has little to do with what is or is not in the deal right now. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) does not want to give President Trump a major legislative “victory” on the eve of the 2020 presidential election. And Pelosi has used her power as speaker of the house to thwart a Republican president before. In 2007, Pelosi suspended what is known as “fast-track” bargaining authority indefinitely when Republican President George W. Bush had sent a



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so-called free-trade deal with Colombia to Congress.

“Fast-track” allows a president to negotiate a trade deal and submit it to Congress for an up-and-down vote. This would appear to violate the Constitution’s provision in Article I, Section 8 that gives *Congress*, not the president, the authority “to regulate commerce with foreign nations.”

Bush’s trade deal was never approved during his tenure. Tim Keeler, then chief of staff for then-U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab, recalled the struggle over the Colombia trade deal with CNBC. “At the time, no president had sent an FTA [free trade agreement] under fast track rules where a speaker was opposed, so we didn’t know how Speaker Pelosi would react.”

This history gives some hope to USMCA opponents, as Pelosi was able to stop the deal then. Unfortunately, this history also indicates that Pelosi’s opposition was more to a trade deal of a *Republican* president, rather than a *Democrat* president. Five years later, Pelosi supported virtually the same deal when Democrat President Barack Obama renegotiated the deal.

Pelosi showed similar hypocrisy recently when she (rightly) said that any military action against Iran by President Trump would require congressional approval, but a few years ago, she argued that President Obama did not need congressional approval to take military action against Libya.

Still, even if Pelosi’s opposition is of impure motives, champions of American national sovereignty should be thankful, if it kills the deal.

Under the rules of “fast-track,” once the bill is officially sent to Congress to implement USMCA, a “clock” starts ticking. Members of Congress would then have 90 working days after receiving the legislation to hold a vote.

This should alert patriotic Americans concerned about more of our national sovereignty being surrendered and cause them to contact their members of Congress. Republican members will be under tremendous pressure to go along with a president of their political party. The deal’s supporters will tout supposed economic benefits for workers, farmers, ranchers, and business, but [it is a bad bill that will hurt most all Americans](#).

Hopefully, Democrats will kill the deal just to prevent Trump from having a victory prior to the 2020 presidential election. This would be a mere temporary victory, however, as the central issue concerning this government-managed trade deal — American national sovereignty — is hardly mentioned in the public debate.

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