



RUSSIA

U.S. Lawmakers Make Last-Ditch Effort To Reverse Biden's Waiver Of Nord Stream 2 Sanctions

September 15, 2021 05:18 GMT

By RFE/RL

A group of bipartisan lawmakers is seeking to undo U.S. President Joe Biden's decision to waive sanctions on the Russian-owned operator of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline in a last-ditch effort to stop it from pumping gas to Europe.

An amendment introduced on September 14 by Representatives Michael McCaul (Republican-Texas), Marcy Kaptur (Democrat-Ohio), and about eight other lawmakers orders the president to impose sanctions on any entity responsible for the planning, construction, or operation of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. It also authorizes new mandatory sanctions to foreign entities and individuals responsible for the planning, construction, and operation of Nord Stream 2.

Completed just last week after Biden waived mandatory congressional sanctions in May, the Baltic Sea pipeline will bring Russian gas directly to Germany, bypassing land routes through Ukraine, Belarus, and other countries. However, it must first receive certification, a process that can take several months, holding out hope for some lawmakers that it can be stopped.

Critics say Nord Stream 2 is designed to deprive Ukraine of lucrative transit fees and will further strengthen Russia's influence over Europe's energy industry.

Ukraine and Poland vehemently oppose the project on the grounds that it is a national security threat, while Germany has steadfastly supported it. The U.S. Congress has sided with Kyiv and Warsaw, imposing two rounds of mandatory sanctions to stop its completion.

However, the Biden administration, in an attempt to improve frayed ties with Germany, agreed to waive the sanctions in exchange for commitments from Berlin to invest in Ukraine's energy industry and push the Kremlin to continue to export some gas through the country.

The amendment sponsored by McCaul and Kaptur was submitted to defense funding legislation under consideration by the House Rules Committee.

The legislation, known as the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), has been used the past two years to impose sanctions on Nord Stream 2, delaying its completion by more than a year.

The Rules Committee has a meeting scheduled for September 20 to decide whether to include the Nord Stream 2 amendment in the NDAA. Lawmakers have the option to defer to the House Foreign Affairs Committee as it did last year when similar legislation was proposed.

There is overwhelming bipartisan support in the U.S. House of Representatives for reimposing sanctions. Democrats allied with Biden hope to stop the amendment from being added to the bill by either committee.