



RUSSIA

U.S. House Votes For Sanctions In 11th-Hour Attempt To Undermine Nord Stream 2

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By Todd Prince

The Democratic-controlled U.S. House of Representatives has agreed to add legislation to the annual defense-spending bill that would place sanctions on Russia's Nord Stream 2 project, potentially putting into jeopardy an agreement reached between the Biden administration and Germany in July.

The House on September 22 unanimously passed on a voice vote a package of amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), including the sanctions legislation.

The House is expected to vote on the NDAA on September 23. The bill would still require approval in the Senate and President Joe Biden's signature to become law.

Biden in May agreed to waive congressionally mandated sanctions on the pipeline in an attempt to smooth out relations with Germany, which has backed the construction of the pipeline. The move opened the door to the completion of the pipeline earlier this month.

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The decision sparked a backlash among lawmakers from both parties, prompting them to submit new legislation that essentially reverses that decision.

"Kudos to Congress," John Herbst, the former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, said in a [tweet](#) after the vote.

Herbst, who is now an analyst at the Washington-based Atlantic Council and a fierce opponent of the pipeline, added that it was a "necessary step to prevent another Biden cave and stop Nord Stream 2."

The amendment is considered a "hail Mary pass" by some Ukraine observers because they do not expect the Democrats to allow a bill onto the floor that is not backed by a president from their own party.

The measure authorizes new mandatory sanctions on entities and individuals involved in the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, including those that certify the project.

Russia announced earlier this month that it completed the construction of the \$11 billion project, but it must still be certified before it can begin operating.

That process can take several months, meaning the U.S. sanctions legislation could still have the potential to halt its launch if it becomes law by the start of the year.

In what experts say is an attempt to speed up certification, Russia has refused to export gas volumes to Europe via Ukraine amid a supply crunch, causing prices to surge to record highs.

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The House amendment was introduced by a group of House lawmakers led by Representatives Michael McCaul (Republican-Texas) and Marcy Kaptur (Democrat-Ohio). Kaptur is the co-chair of the Congressional Ukraine Caucus.

The Nord Stream 2 project is designed to carry Russian gas directly to Germany, bypassing land routes through Ukraine and depriving Kyiv of as much as \$2 billion a year in transit fees.

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 via the NDAA in 2019 and 2020 to stop its completion.

The Biden administration, in an attempt to improve frayed ties with Germany, agreed into waive the mandatory 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.