

# Impeachment 306: Politico: Pelosi casts doubt on USMCA passing in 2019

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House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Thursday cast doubt that Congress has enough time left to pass the USMCA this year, even if House Democrats and the Trump administration work out a compromise on remaining issues.

U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer will meet with Pelosi and House Ways and Means Chairman Richard Neal (D-Mass.) to discuss the last sticking points on the deal. Democrats want the trade chief to deliver on stronger enforcement mechanisms in the USMCA, the pact that will take the place of NAFTA, before a House vote is held.

"I'm not even sure if we came to an agreement today that it would be enough time to finish [this year], but just depends on how much agreement we come to," Pelosi told reporters.

Pelosi indicated last week that a deal was "imminent." But on Thursday, she clarified that it "could be" imminent.

"I'm eager to get this done," Pelosi added.

Thursday is the last day before Thanksgiving break for the House, and Democrats and the Trump administration have long hoped to strike an agreement by now to give lawmakers time in December to consider the pact.

The California Democrat outlined how numerous steps must be carried out even once an agreement is reached with Lighthizer.

The Trump administration must get Mexico and Canada to approve any changes to the USMCA text, which leaders from all three countries signed in late November of 2018.

The administration also has to put together the formal implementing legislation that will be sent to Congress. After that, the bill will be marked up and voted on.

Pelosi has been under increased pressure in recent days to wrap up the USMCA negotiations as a number of moderate Democrats — particularly from districts Trump won in the 2016 election — have been vocal about their desire to pass the deal. They have been frustrated with the slow pace of action, particularly as they face criticism from constituents over the impeachment inquiry.

“I keep telling the freshman class: ‘This is about legislation. It takes time,’” she said.

The Trump administration has been negotiating since June with a group of nine Democrats tapped by Pelosi to secure changes to the USMCA. Those negotiations have focused on Democrats’ four major areas of concern: enforcement, labor and environmental standards, as well as prescription drug pricing.