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Activists protest Miami decision to postpone vote on trade talk demonstrations

By CHARLES RABIN

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A small group of civic activists rallied outside Miami City Hall Thursday, upset with the city commission's decision to defer a vote on protest regulations for November's international trade talks.

The commission voted 3-1 in favor of delaying a final vote on the rules until Oct. 23, only weeks before the gathering -- a move that would leave civil rights groups like the ACLU little time to take legal action against the ordinance should it pass.

Commissioners Joe Sanchez, Angel Gonzalez and Johnny Winton voted for the deferral. Commissioner Tomas Regalado, concerned a delay would halt an open debate, voted against. Commissioner Arthur Teele Jr., was absent.

"You're closing the window for public debate," said Regalado. "The secrecy of trying to iron out differences is wrong."

Outside the chamber after the commission's vote, some activists expressed their concerns. A group from Palm Beach County, Lake Worth Global Justice, danced around in colorful clown outfits, on stilts, holding signs and banging on bongos.

Another woman from the Coalition of Immokolee Workers held a sign saying "Taco Bell Exploits Workers." Members of the local Green Party were also there.

"The deferral is unacceptable," said Carolina Delgado, media coordinator for the South Floridians for Fair Trade and Global Justice. "The real problem with deferring another month is there is less time to take action."