

# Peru Trade Pact Passes House

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Politico  
November 8, 2007

The House Thursday passed a free trade agreement with Peru, the first of four major trade pacts pending in Congress.

The bill passed 285 to 132 in a vote that was closely watched everywhere from K Street to Wall Street.

With passage of the bill all but assured after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) endorsed it; the only real drama was over how many Democrats would defy leadership and vote against it.

Ultimately, 116 Democrats voted against the measure.

Under special trade rules that apply to the Peru agreement, known as “fast-track,” lawmakers were barred from offering amendments to the deal, which the Bush administration signed in April 2006.

Trade advocates assumed the Peru pact was all but dead once Democrats gained control of Congress. However, after the administration consented to Democratic demands that enforceable labor and environmental standards be added to the Peru pact and to deals with Panama, Colombia and South Korea, debate was reignited.

But the concessions did not placate trade critics in the Democratic Caucus and a group of dissenters, backed by labor activists, has fought hard against the Peru pact.