

U.S. House delays vote on Peru trade pact

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WASHINGTON - Leaders in the U.S. House of Representatives have decided to delay a vote on a free-trade agreement with Peru until Thursday, House Democratic Leader Steny Hoyer said.

Hoyer made the announcement on the House floor on Wednesday after lawmakers approved a procedural motion to begin debate on the bill. Hoyer said the Democratic-led House would conduct most of the debate on Wednesday evening but finish it on Thursday morning and then vote on the trade agreement.

"We will commence the closing of debate (on Thursday morning) and then we will have the vote on this bill immediately following that debate," Hoyer said to the applause of lawmakers eager to go home for the night.

There remained every indication the Peru trade agreement was headed for approval, despite complaints from some Democrats it would cost American jobs.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who voted against a similar trade agreement with Central American countries and the Dominican Republic two years ago, said she intended to vote for the Peru agreement.

The deal "rises to the level of acceptance" because of recent changes to strengthen its labor and environmental provisions, she said.

"If you're ever going to support any trade agreement, I would think this would be the easiest one to do," Pelosi said. (Editing by Peter Cooney)