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# U.S. Group Expects Trade Bill Passage Sept. 12

By The Moscow Times

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A U.S. business group said it is hopeful that Congress will approve a bill to upgrade U.S. trade relations with Russia after it returns from a monthlong break, and it warned that U.S. companies would lose business if lawmakers don't act.

Dan Flaherty, vice president at the National Foreign Trade Council, said late Tuesday that the group was gearing up its lobbying efforts for a vote in the House of Representatives as early as Sept. 12, which it hopes will be followed by quick Senate action. If not, U.S. exporters will be left at a significant disadvantage to competitors in Europe, Asia and elsewhere around the world after Russia formally entered the World Trade Organization on Wednesday, Flaherty said.

Congress is under pressure to approve "permanent normal trade relations" with Russia by repealing a Cold War provision known as the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which ties normal U.S. tariff rates for Russia to emigration issues.

Business groups, which have been working for months to win approval of normal trade relations, are concerned the issue could be delayed until after the November presidential and congressional elections, or even into 2013, if lawmakers don't act quickly in September.

WTO Director General Pascal Lamy said he was optimistic Congress would approve the bill in the coming weeks because "if the U.S. was not to do this, this probably would be a disadvantage for U.S. business."

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