

A top Republican senator just made it clear that Trump's new trade deal with Mexico and Canada could still fall apart

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Business Insider, Oct 2, 2018



Drew Angerer/Getty ImagesSens. John Cornyn and Chuck Schumer.

- President Donald Trump agreed to a new version of the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico on Sunday.
- The new deal, named the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, must be approved by Congress before it can take effect.
- Sen. John Cornyn, the second-highest-ranking Republican senator, told reporters on Tuesday that the deal's passage in Congress was not certain.
- The USMCA isn't likely to make it to Congress before 2019, when Democrats could have a majority in one of the chambers.

President Donald Trump's victory lap on the new [trade agreement among the US, Canada, and Mexico](#) may have been premature, per one top Republican senator's lay of the congressional land.

Sen. John Cornyn, the second-highest-ranking Senate Republican, suggested to reporters Tuesday that [the revised version of the North American Free Trade Agreement](#), agreed to Sunday night, might not have the votes to make it through Congress.

"I know people are still going through the details, but it's not a foregone conclusion that it will get confirmation by the Senate," Cornyn said.

The Texas Republican also said a congressional vote on the new deal, dubbed the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, would definitely not happen until after the November midterm elections and would most likely slip into 2019.

Read more: [The US, Canada, and Mexico's new trade pact looks a lot like NAFTA. Here are the key differences between them.](#)

The comment is the first public acknowledgment by a GOP leader that the new trade deal may run into roadblocks.

While the Trump administration is negotiating the NAFTA revision under the fast-track [trade promotion authority](#), any final agreement is still subject to a majority vote in both chambers of Congress.

Trump, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto are expected to sign the agreement shortly before the latter leaves office on November 30. Given the trade promotion authority's notification requirements, that means Congress would not vote on the deal until 2019, when Democrats could be in control of at least one chamber.

With a majority, Democrats would have much more leverage to scuttle the deal. Party leaders have already said that the new labor and environmental standards in the updated deal will receive close scrutiny.

"The bar for supporting a new NAFTA will be high," Rep. Richard Neal, the ranking member on the House Ways and Means Committee, [told reporters on Monday](#).

During a [press conference on Monday](#), Trump acknowledged possible issues with Democrats on the trade deal.

"I then will submit it for approval to Congress, where, in theory, there should be no trouble, but anything you submit to Congress is trouble, no matter what, " Trump said. "If it's the single greatest agreement ever signed, they'll say, 'Well, you know, Trump likes it, therefore we're not going to approve it, because that would be good for the Republicans, so therefore we can't approve it.'"

But some Republican lawmakers have also expressed concerns about the details of the deal.

"While the administration's proposal improves some elements of the existing NAFTA, such as strengthened IP rights, increased market access for US dairy processors, and a new chapter on digital trade, other provisions diminish NAFTA's economic benefits and create needless uncertainty," said Sen. Pat Toomey, a Republican from Pennsylvania.

Here's a quick rundown of the procedure the deal would have to go through:

- **Before December 1:** The deal must be signed by the three leaders.

- **Within 60 days after the deal is signed:** The Trump administration must notify Congress of necessary changes to US law that need to be made to enact the deal.
- **Within 150 days after the deal is signed:** The US International Trade Commission must release a report on the economic impact of the deal.
- **At least 30 days before the deal is formally submitted as a bill to Congress:** The text of the implementing legislation must be released.
- **The bill is considered by committees in the House and Senate and voted on:** The implementing bill would start in the House and be passed in a matter of days or could take months, depending on Congress' wishes.

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