

Amodei joins push for Ex-Im Bank vote

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WASHINGTON — In a rare gambit, a group of Republicans including Nevada's Mark Amodei has joined Democrats to force a vote later this month on a bill to revive the Export-Import Bank, whose charter expired in July.

The bank provides subsidies and loan guarantees to foreign buyers of United States goods who can't get private-sector financing. It has been vilified as "corporate cronyism" by some conservative Republicans, notably in the tea party wing.

Critics say the bank mainly benefits corporate giants such as Boeing and General Electric. Others, including Amodei, say it supports American jobs and helps the nation compete in the global market.

Nearly half of the \$235 billion in exports supported by the bank since 2009 was from Washington — home of Boeing. That state accounted for \$108.8 billion, or roughly 710 times as much as Nevada's \$153 million.

Nevada's total ranked 40th in the nation, and Texas was second at \$23.4 billion.

With a divided caucus, House Republican leaders have declined to bring a reauthorization bill to the floor, leaving supporters to turn to a "discharge petition," which can force a vote with 218 signatures — a simple majority.

Few such petitions succeed because they require members of the majority party to defy their leadership. The last time it happened was 2002, when campaign finance reform was approved.

"This Republican-led petition is a procedure to stand up to Washington's broken system that is killing thousands of American jobs and jeopardizing thousands more," said Rep. Stephen Fincher, R-Tenn., who filed the petition and has sponsored two bills to reauthorize the bank.

Amodei, a co-sponsor on both bills, said the discharge petition is "parliamentary procedure of last resort" that should be used to bring urgent legislation to the floor for debate. He said 90 percent of the bank's transactions are for small businesses and that it supports about 164,000 jobs nationally.

More than 60 countries have similar agencies that promote exports. China, Japan, Canada, South Korea and Germany provide more support than the United States does, Amodei said.

The reauthorization bills have been held up in the House Financial Services Committee, whose chairman, Jeb Hensarling, R-Texas, has said that a majority of its GOP members oppose the Export-Import Bank.

"Signing a discharge petition puts the minority in charge and effectively makes Nancy Pelosi the speaker of the House," Hensarling said. "At a time when our Republican conference is divided, this will divide it even further."

Adam Jones, Nevada director of the Koch brothers-backed conservative group Americans for Prosperity, has argued the state would be better off with the Export-Import Bank shuttered.

Jones says the bank picks winners and losers in the economy, loses taxpayer money and endangers American jobs.

Nevada's prime exports include gold, copper and aviation parts. Jones wrote in a recent op-ed piece that those industries must compete against foreign businesses that get Export-Import Bank financing.

Jones pointed to research from the Cato Institute that found the bank costs the U.S. economy \$2.8 billion.

Proponents say the bank supported exports from more than 7,500 American companies between 2009 and 2014.

Terry Culp, deputy director of Nevada Industry Excellence, argued in a recent op-ed piece that the bank levels the playing field for American exporters who otherwise could lose an estimated \$27 billion in annual exports to foreign companies that receive subsidies from their governments.

Without the bank, he wrote, "foreign customers would simply buy Mahindra tractors instead of Caterpillar, Airbus jets instead of Boeing."

Amodei represents the bulk of the companies in Nevada that have received help from the Export-Import Bank, according to bank data.

Since 2007, the bank supported \$139 million in exports made by 30 Nevada companies that supported 888 jobs. Of that, Amodei's district accounted for \$116.9 million, 19 companies and 747 jobs.

Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nev., also signed the discharge petition, saying it is "long past time to renew the Ex-Im Bank."

The bank supported \$1.4 million in exports from Titus' district since 2007 from three companies that support nine jobs. The Las Vegas companies are Innova Technologies, Lavelle Enterprises and United States Juice Corp.