

# Orlando Sentinel

## Save or scuttle U.S. Ex-Im Bank?

By Paul Owens

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When members of Congress bugged out of the Capitol last week for their annual August recess, they left hanging the fate of the U.S. Export-Import Bank. Unless Congress votes to reauthorize it, the bank is scheduled to go out of business after Sept. 30.

The Ex-Im Bank provides loans and other assistance to businesses to help them sell U.S. goods and services abroad. President Franklin Roosevelt created the bank 80 years ago during the Great Depression, when private financing was especially scarce. The bank's mission is to create and sustain U.S. jobs by promoting exports; it claims credit for supporting 1.2 million U.S. private-sector jobs since 2009.

But critics, who consider the bank a poster child for crony capitalism, have targeted it for elimination. They contend it provides its taxpayer-backed loans to politically powerful companies, giving them an unfair advantage over their less-connected competitors. They argue that exporters should rely on financing from private lenders.

Supporters, including the Obama administration and business groups, counter that the bank is essential to help U.S. companies compete with foreign rivals who get as much or more help from their governments.

These conflicting views are represented in today's Front Burner columns.

The fate of the Ex-Im Bank is being closely followed in Florida. Bank figures show it has supported \$7 billion worth of exports from 737 companies in the Sunshine State, including 571 small businesses, over the past seven years.

Would those companies have succeeded without government help? That's the question.

Read more about it

\*The Export-Import Bank's website, with facts and figures about its programs, is [exim.gov](http://exim.gov).

\*The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is among the bank's supporters. Go to [uschamber.com](http://uschamber.com) and search "ex-im bank."

\*The Cato Institute, a free-market think tank, is among its opponents. Go to [cato.org](http://cato.org) and search "ex-im bank."