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## House Votes Overwhelmingly to Extend Export-Import Bank

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WASHINGTON — The House on Wednesday overwhelmingly voted to extend the life of the [Export-Import Bank of the United States](#), siding with business groups over conservative activists who wanted Republicans to let the bank's charter lapse at the end of May.

The 330-to-93 vote is expected to propel the bill to final passage before May 31, when the bank's statutory lending authority and its authorization expire. Senator [Harry Reid](#), Democrat of Nevada and the Senate majority leader, said Tuesday that the Senate would quickly take up the House bill and try to pass it unchanged, obviating House-Senate negotiations on a final version.

That seemingly smooth path to President Obama's desk belies the rancor that led to the House vote. Conservative political groups including Club for Growth, Heritage Action for America and the Cato Institute have spent months denouncing the government-chartered bank as a big business boondoggle that could become the next Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, leaving taxpayers responsible for billions of dollars in loan guarantees. With the bank's legal authorization expiring soon, the groups appealed to Republicans up to the last minute on Wednesday, saying they had a rare opportunity to kill a government institution.

On the other side, the [United States Chamber of Commerce](#) and the National Association of Manufacturers mobilized an army of business representatives to plead the case that the bank was vital to ensure financing for overseas customers. Without the bank, United States exports — one of the bright spots in the fragile recovery — would suffer greatly, they said.

Amid that clash, Representative [Eric Cantor](#), Republican of Virginia, the House majority leader, and Representative [Steny H. Hoyer](#), Democrat of Maryland, the House minority whip, negotiated a compromise for a three-year reauthorization that would raise the bank's lending limit to \$140 billion over three years, a 40 percent increase from the current \$100 billion limit that the bank has almost reached.

The agreement also would mandate a series of government audits and report requirements that critics say is necessary to ensure the institution is not exposing taxpayers to great risk, and it requires the Treasury

secretary to begin multilateral negotiations with finance ministers around the world aimed at ending government export subsidies internationally.

In the end, the vote appeared to show that old guard business groups still have muscle in the [Tea Party](#) era. Republicans cast all 93 no votes.

In an interview, Fred P. Hochberg, the president of the Export-Import Bank of the United States, called the House vote “a big step forward to taking uncertainty away for American exporters.”

He said the bank would respond to concerns in Congress about its financial stability, ensuring that it kept defaults on its loans to a minimum. “I believe we have been prudent with taxpayer money,” he said. “But this is a reminder that we have to be mindful that if defaults were to run at a higher level, we have to continue to be responsible.”

Representative Tom McClintock, Republican of California, mocked the bank for subsidizing the sales of “that plucky little upstart called Boeing” and blasted colleagues for saying that ending the bank’s charter would amount to unilateral disarmament against other countries with even larger export banks. “Other nations want to impoverish themselves in this manner,” he said. “We don’t need to imitate them.”

But a majority of the Republican majority did vote for reauthorization. The Chamber of Commerce may have aided its cause with a wave of advertising, largely to support Republican candidates in the fall elections.

Established in the 1930s to facilitate trade with the Soviet Union, the bank helps arrange financing for foreign buyers of United States exports, with deals paid for by the trading partners.

*Annie Lowrey contributed reporting.*