



leadership if we fail to pass TPP and allow China to carve up the Asia-Pacific through their own trade agreement." In fact, supporters view TPP as a way to push Beijing into adopting higher trade and economic standards in the rapidly growing region.

As part of that plan, the United States and China are working aggressively toward forging a bilateral investment treaty. Fabio Ghironi, an economics Professor at the University of Washington, said that TPP will "create an opportunity for engagement rather than for antagonizing" with China, giving the U.S. and its trading partners more influence on the security and trade fronts in the region.

But the TPP still faces opposition in Congress from both Democrats and Republicans who are stressing that they won't help pass the TPP until the White House resolves their concerns on issues like the treatment of pharmaceuticals and tobacco.

Amid all this, TPP trading partners such as New Zealand are saying that the deal must be passed or the United States will face the stark reality of being left out. This is a growing reality with the 16-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership moving forward with China and India as well as New Zealand and Australia. That deal could be done by year's end, putting the pressure on the TPP countries.

"This is unquestionably the year to do it," Tim Groser, New Zealand's ambassador to the United States, told reporters recently. If Congress doesn't pass the TPP this year "where the US will go is a very interesting question," Groser told The Hill.

How important the geopolitical argument will be remains to be seen. The Hill says that most congressional lawmakers understand the gravity of the decision they are facing on whether to pass the TPP this year. Gabe Horwitz, vice president of the economic program at the center-left think tank Third Way, said that lawmakers are looking at both the economic and the strategic aspects of the deal but "U.S. leadership in the region is a huge thing on Capitol Hill."

Thomas Donohue, president and CEO of the US Chamber of Commerce and a powerful trade advocate said that TPP will determine which of the countries in the Pacific are going to align with U.S. views and which ones align with China. He also argues that whomever wins the White House will have to acknowledge that point.

So, the fight over the TPP is important, extremely bitter and likely will be prolonged. It is especially important to agriculture and should be watched closely by producers as it proceeds, Washington Insider believes.

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