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US Senate passes one-year Agoa extension

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The US Senate has passed legislation extending the African Growth and Opportunity Act (Agoa) for one year, providing temporary duty-free access to the American market for over 1 800 goods from eligible African countries, including South Africa.

The extension, part of a 1 000-page Appropriations Bill passed on Friday, revives the trade deal, which lapsed in September, until the end of 2026.

The Bill requires final concurrence from the House of Representatives (which passed its own version last month) and the signature of President Donald Trump to take effect. It applies retroactively from the lapsed date.

South Africa, the largest non-oil beneficiary under the trade pact, exported approximately R66 billion worth of goods to the US under Agoa in 2023, mostly vehicles, steel additives, jewellery and citrus fruit.

On Tuesday, Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Parks Tau, welcomed the Senate's decision but expressed concern over the limited duration of the scheme.

“This extension will provide some relief to South African products exported under the scheme.

“We are, however, concerned by the short nature of the extension and we hope the United States will use this opportunity provided by the short extension towards a programme that will provide certainty around investment and purchasing decisions.”

He highlighted ongoing engagements with the US administration on an Agreement on Reciprocal Tariffs to address the 30% tariff imposed on South African exports.

“We continue to engage constructively with the US administration and believe that a healthy trade relationship benefits both our countries.”

The one-year renewal falls short of African expectations, including a three-year extension previously approved by the House in a standalone bill. The Trump administration has favoured a shorter term, aligning with his ‘America First’ trade policy and scepticism toward longer commitments.

South Africa's eligibility remains under scrutiny in Washington. US politicians, including Republican Senator John Kennedy, have criticised Pretoria's foreign policy alignments, describing it as a ‘unique problem’ and questioning its inclusion. US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer has indicated openness to separate treatment for South Africa under the deal.

Broader US tariffs, including reciprocal measures and duties on vehicles, have already diminished the pact's benefits for South African exporters.

Read the full Congress Bill [here](#) .