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## Public lands bill fails in House as Democratic leaders miscalculate

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WASHINGTON – Democratic leaders suffered an embarrassing defeat Wednesday as the House failed to pass a public lands bill.

The 1,248-page bill, which included provisions ranging from new Pacific Northwest scenic trails to Everglades National Park additions, secured a solid House majority. The 282-144 vote, though, fell just short of the two-thirds margin needed under the special rules in play.

"They were trying to be too cute by half," said bill opponent Rep. Devin Nunes, R-Tulare. "This was a completely ridiculous process."

The House vote does not permanently kill the public lands bill. Before it returns, though, the House leaders who miscalculated Wednesday will have to reconsider their tactics.

The leadership's first tactical decision was to fold 172 different provisions into one giant package. This big-tent approach is typical for public lands legislation, because it diversifies political support.

By Wednesday morning, though, the bill's size worked against it.

House leaders brought the bill up under a suspension of the rules. This blocks potential amendments, but it also requires a two-thirds vote instead of the standard majority.

"This vote was a rejection of Democrat leaders' attempt to abuse the suspension process to jam through an over 1,200-page bill costing \$10 billion without any chance to amend or improve it," said Rep. Doc Hastings of Washington, senior Republican on the House Natural Resources Committee.

As a matter of political practice, leaders generally won't bring bills up for a House vote unless they are confident they will pass. This is particularly true for suspension bills. The bill's failure suggests some rank-and-file members wavered or House leaders did not have a firm grasp on how much support they really had.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco, and her team could now try twisting arms to win over a few additional votes. They could revive the bill under standard rules for which only a majority vote is needed, though this could expose members to tricky amendments. Democrats have been particularly leery of gun-related amendments, which could put rural lawmakers on the spot.

The leadership team could bring the bill back under standard rules but use its control of the

House floor to limit what amendments are offered.

"We will continue to determine the best course of action to advance these measures," said Rep. Nick Rahall, the West Virginia Democrat who chairs the resources panel.

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