

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell
Floor Speech on Ocean Shipping Reform Act

March 23, 2022

[\[VIDEO\]](#)

Cantwell: I've been joined here on the floor by my colleague, Senator Klobuchar. We very much appreciate her and Senator Thune's efforts on trying to tackle some of the supply chain issues that are at the ports.

Our ports are seeing record amount of traffic, 20-some percent increase in the amount of traffic coming into the United States. And that congestion has caused lots of problems at our ports. Senator Klobuchar and Thune announced legislation that we marked up in committee earlier this week that I hope we'll see action on the Senate floor as early as next week.

That legislation puts new tools into the hands of the Federal Maritime Commission, whose job it is to make sure that there aren't unreasonable rates or practices that negatively impact shippers in the United States. And right now, what's happening is, particularly our agricultural sector is getting very hard hit.

That is that literally, some of these foreign shippers who are at record profits have basically been leaving without the U.S. exports. They literally are coming to the United States, dropping product off and leaving, less than full, and hurrying back to pick up more product and deliver it to the United States.

And our growers haven't been able to get their products onto those ships and the result of that is they are left on the docks and without the ability to deliver the product to the customers that they would like to see.

So our farmers need help and solutions on this. One solution by the Biden-Harris administration that Secretary Vilsack has implemented, is a pop-up space at our ports to help defray the cost of freight that's been caused.

I just want our colleagues to know that more needs to be done with the Klobuchar-Thune bill because the container cost has gone from \$1,300 per container to \$11,000 per container. This is part of the data that's been provided to us. And what's happened is that not only that it's the cost that they're facing, as I said, sometimes they're called and what's said is, 'if your product isn't here, then we're leaving without it.' And that is a big problem for if you're talking about Washington apples, seafood, and any of the other products that are big from our state.

One individual testified or came to a press event that we had in Seattle last week, said that in the dairy industry and supply chain last year, the problems cost U.S. dairy over \$1.5 billion. And it means that more containers are leaving the port empty.

We believe that the loss of revenue to the ag sector may be as much as 22%. That is that our ag sector isn't being able to get their product out. So I want to thank the President for his infrastructure package and putting more money into ports and port development, as we did in a bipartisan way with our colleagues in the Commerce Committee. And also, for getting this project up and running here at Terminal 46 in Seattle.

This pop-up storage helped facilitate and pre-position our agricultural products so that they could be ready to get on those ships and not face a penalty because of the congestion we're seeing.

USDA is providing our exporters with \$200 to \$400 per container to help with the storage costs, but it's literally getting them in position so that they can be right around the corner and get picked up quickly. So I want to thank the Biden administration on that.

But I also want to encourage our colleagues to move ahead, as I mentioned, on the Klobuchar-Thune bill, which is saying to the major federal entity whose day job it is to oversee reasonable rates as it relates to shipping in the United States, please, let's get this legislation on the Senate floor.

If we care about supply chain issues, if we care about the prices that are impacting consumers, then let's get this legislation on the floor. Obviously, the amount of costs that we're seeing per container, and the amount of increase in those container costs are impacting everyone. So if those costs are on every container, whether they're coming in or leaving, then we're seeing increased costs to consumers and consumer products all across the board.

So let's get the supply chain issues, like USICA, the United States Innovation and Competition Act. Let's get that supply chain moving. Let's get that supply chain of us making legislation with the house moving so we can fix real supply chain problems with our semiconductors. And let's get this Federal Maritime Commission bill on the floor next week so we can address the supply chain problems that are costing us more with ag and costing us more with imports.

I thank the President and I yield the floor.