

Senator Maria Cantwell

Floor Speech on USMCA

January 15, 2020

CANTWELL: Mr. President, I thank my colleague for mentioning and honoring Chris Allen, and our sympathies to the Grassley family. Thank you so much for talking about the hard work that so many of our staff do around the Capitol that people don't realize. And while we have lost some on our side too, it's important to remember those who give so much of their time and energy to make our country better.

Mr. President, I rise to support the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement we're going to be voting on tomorrow, and I want to thank all the people who worked on it including Senator Grassley, Senator Wyden, Senator Brown, Speaker Pelosi, and many other people to get us a final product, that I think we all believe should move forward.

It's very important to me, coming from one of the most trade-dependent states, that we continue to open up trade markets. But I hope my colleagues will also realize that the world economy has reached a tipping point. Over half of the world is now either middle-class or wealthier. So that means that we have more people to sell more U.S. products to. That means bigger market opportunities for U.S. manufactured goods, for agriculture products, and a way for us to continue to compete in some of our most important industries. That is why I've always supported making sure that we continue to open up trade markets in a fair way. And for us in Washington state, the North American Free Trade Agreement was a positive move. In the context, prior to the agreement for Washington, in Mexico there was \$300 million of business. Now there's more than \$2 billion. And they are our largest exports for Washington apples.

Today, in Canada, you can see a similar story. Prior to the North American Free Trade Agreement, our products into that country were roughly about \$2 billion, today they're \$9 billion. So continuing to modernize the North American Free Trade Agreement is an important step for Washington and for our economy. The important aspects of this deal help us open and get a fair playing field for wheat, for making sure that digital trade continues in a fair way, and that dairy products are accessed into Canada in a fair way and that our wine industry, believe it or not, Canadians drink a lot of wine, particularly in British Columbia, and they have not always given us fair access to that market. So it is very important that it will increase access to Washington wines into Canada, which is the largest market for Washington wines, buying about ten million dollars in exports a year. But as I mentioned, USMCA will maintain a duty-free access for our dairy products to Mexico, it will certainly make sure that our wheat products are on a level playing field, and continue the access to digital trade.

I want to thank my colleagues, Senator Brown and Senator Wyden and Speaker Pelosi, and all those in the labor movement, who worked hard with getting an enforcement and capacity-building provision in this legislation. I'm sure this will be a subject of a lot of debate tomorrow

on a couple of amendments. But what we're doing here that I know of for the first time, is business and labor coming together and saying "we need to build the capacity within a country so that they can enforce trade agreements." This is a positive step, not just for Mexico, but a positive step for what we need to do around the globe. I wish we could just say to every country, "yes, put up the regime to enforce these laws and make it happen tomorrow, and we can help you and your economy." But it just doesn't work like that. And when you retreat from trade—and, trust me, I believe this administration has retreated from trade when it starts with a tariff-first approach. You cannot start the discussion with throwing out tariffs and then penalizing our farmers and then thinking that we're going to get the door open. So I'm all ears to hear what we're going to get with China.

But I thank my colleagues who did the hard work on this agreement to make enforcement and capacity building real for the first time. Why? Because as we look at that world economy outside the United States, it's one of the biggest economic opportunities we will see. That is, we know how to grow things. We know how to make things. We should make sure we're opening up markets in a fair trade regime to those products. So I will continue to work with our colleagues here to make sure that that is achieved. I hope the President will stop the tariff first approach, stop the continuation of the tariffs and the impacts that we're seeing now, and get down to continuing to negotiations with us being a leader for opening up markets.

The United States can't lose shelf space to very, very competitive markets and then come back years later and try to regain it. Let's be a world leader in establishing the rules for fair trade and pushing for provisions like we see in the Mexico agreement so we can move forward making sure Washington products, U.S. Products, American-made products, get delivered to a growing, wealthier world.

I thank the President and I yield the floor.