

Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Sherri A. Lydon, of South Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the District of South Carolina.

Steve Daines, Roy Blunt, John Thune, Richard Burr, John Cornyn, Chuck Grassley, Tom Cotton, Rick Scott, Mike Crapo, Shelley Moore Capito, John Boozman, Roger F. Wicker, Cindy Hyde-Smith, David Perdue, Mike Rounds, John Hoeven, Mitch McConnell.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Sherri A. Lydon, of South Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the District of South Carolina, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 79, nays 14, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 376 Ex.]

YEAS—79

Alexander	Fischer	Portman
Baldwin	Gardner	Reed
Barrasso	Graham	Risch
Blackburn	Grassley	Roberts
Blunt	Hassan	Romney
Boozman	Hawley	Rosen
Braun	Heinrich	Rubio
Burr	Hoeven	Sasse
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Cardin	Inhofe	Scott (SC)
Carper	Johnson	Shaheen
Casey	Jones	Shelby
Cassidy	Kaine	Sinema
Collins	Kennedy	Stabenow
Coons	King	Sullivan
Cornyn	Lankford	Tester
Cortez Masto	Leahy	Thune
Cotton	Lee	Tillis
Cramer	Manchin	Toomey
Crapo	McConnell	Udall
Cruz	McSally	Warner
Daines	Menendez	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Moran	
Durbin	Murphy	Wicker
Enzi	Paul	Wyden
Ernst	Perdue	Young
Feinstein	Peters	

NAYS—14

Bennet	Hirono	Schatz
Blumenthal	Klobuchar	Schumer
Brown	Markey	Smith
Cantwell	Merkley	Van Hollen
Gillibrand	Murray	

NOT VOTING—7

Booker	Murkowski	Warren
Harris	Rounds	
Isakson	Sanders	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 79, the nays are 14.

The motion is agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior legislative clerk read the motion, as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Robert M. Duncan, of Kentucky, to be a Governor of the United States Postal Service for a term expiring December 8, 2025. (Reappointment)

Kevin Cramer, David Perdue, Ben Sasse, Rob Portman, Johnny Isakson, John Thune, Mike Rounds, Roy Blunt, Mitch McConnell, Chuck Grassley, John Boozman, Tom Cotton, Pat Roberts, Richard Burr, Rick Scott, James E. Risch, Shelley Moore Capito.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense the Senate that debate on the nomination of Robert M. Duncan, of Kentucky, to be a Governor of the United States Postal Service for a term expiring December 8, 2025, (Reappointment), shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 91, nays 1, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 377 Ex.]

YEAS—91

Alexander	Cornyn	Heinrich
Baldwin	Cortez Masto	Hoeven
Barrasso	Cotton	Hyde-Smith
Bennet	Cramer	Inhofe
Blackburn	Crapo	Johnson
Blumenthal	Cruz	Jones
Blunt	Daines	Kaine
Boozman	Duckworth	Kennedy
Braun	Durbin	King
Brown	Enzi	Lankford
Burr	Ernst	Leahy
Cantwell	Feinstein	Lee
Capito	Fischer	Manchin
Cardin	Gardner	Markey
Carper	Gillibrand	McConnell
Casey	Graham	McSally
Cassidy	Grassley	Menendez
Collins	Hassan	Merkley
Coons	Hawley	Moran

Murphy	Sasse	Thune
Murray	Schatz	Tillis
Paul	Schumer	Toomey
Perdue	Scott (FL)	Udall
Peters	Scott (SC)	Van Hollen
Portman	Shaheen	Warner
Reed	Shelby	Whitehouse
Risch	Sinema	Wicker
Roberts	Smith	Wyden
Romney	Stabenow	Young
Rosen	Sullivan	
Rubio	Tester	

NAYS—1

Hirono

NOT VOTING—8

Booker	Klobuchar	Sanders
Harris	Murkowski	Warren
Isakson	Rounds	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas are 91, the nays are 1.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert M. Duncan, of Kentucky, to be a Governor of the United States Postal Service for a term expiring December 8, 2025. (Reappointment)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

SUPPORT FOR VETERANS IN EFFECTIVE APPRENTICESHIPS ACT OF 2019

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, when I travel across Michigan, one issue comes up regularly in my conversations with business owners, workers, and families, and that issue is the need to close the skills gap.

There are good-paying jobs available all across my State but not enough workers who have the specific skills needed to fill them. That is why one of my top priorities in the Senate is to expand access to quality skills training programs, like registered apprenticeships, that are connected to today's in-demand jobs.

Effective apprenticeships are good for business. They are good for workers in both urban and rural areas in Michigan, as well as all across our country.

I have also heard from veterans, like Rick Donovan in Oakland County, about how there is a lack of apprenticeships available for veterans who qualify for them to use their GI benefits.

The GI bill offers veterans an approved apprenticeship, additional financial support for housing, and other training materials as they progress through the program. Unfortunately, only a small portion of apprenticeship programs registered by the Department of Labor are also approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In Michigan, for example, there are over 1,000 registered apprenticeship programs but only a couple hundred in which veterans can use their VA educational assistance in connection with that program. This is simply unacceptable. Veterans should have access to as

many opportunities as there are available.

That is why Senator CAPITO and I introduced a bipartisan bill to ensure veterans' interests are not falling through the cracks between Federal agencies as they pursue apprenticeships to launch their career. Our Support for Veterans in Effective Apprenticeships Act takes three commonsense steps to expand opportunities for veterans to use their financial assistance for quality training programs that lead to good-paying jobs.

First, the bill will ensure that every program applying to become a registered apprenticeship is proactively thinking about ways to support veterans. Programs would need to provide written assurance to the Department of Labor that they are aware of GI bill assistance and are committed to taking the steps necessary to enable benefits to use these benefits as apprentices.

Second, the bill will clarify that skills and training that veterans gain during their military service would be a factor into how they are placed in the program. Many veterans may qualify for advanced placement with higher apprenticeship wages due to their unique experiences while bravely serving our country, and our bill will recognize those skill sets.

Third, the bill will improve coordination between Federal agencies. It would direct the Department of Labor to notify the VA of newly registered apprenticeship programs. It is a simple, straightforward action to actively update new apprenticeship opportunities.

Our Nation's returning heroes deserve every opportunity to pursue their professional dreams after their service. By expanding qualified apprenticeships, this bill will make a real difference in the lives of our veterans.

Rick, a veteran advocate from Michigan, said he would never have known that he could use his GI bill benefits for on-the-job training had he not crossed paths with a more senior veteran who told him about it. It was a conversation that literally changed his life. With the support of the GI bill, Rick was now able to pursue an apprenticeship following his military service. He then used that training toward a college degree and has built a successful career as a union sheet metal worker in Michigan.

We need to listen to and partner with veterans like Rick who are tirelessly advocating to open doors to help fellow veterans, Michiganders, and Americans so they can achieve economic success in the 21st century.

As in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 760 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 760) to enable registered apprenticeship programs to better serve veterans, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Peters amendment at the desk be agreed to and that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 1254), in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Support for Veterans in Effective Apprenticeships Act of 2019".

SEC. 2. IMPROVED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM COORDINATION BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

(1) REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM.—The term "registered apprenticeship program" means an apprenticeship program registered under the Act of August 16, 1937 (50 Stat. 664; commonly referred to as the "National Apprenticeship Act").

(2) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of Labor.

(b) ADDITIONAL REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, for any program applying to become a registered apprenticeship program on or after the date that is 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall—

(1) acquire from the program sponsor a written assurance that the sponsor—

(A) is aware of the availability of educational assistance for a veteran or other individual eligible under chapters 30 through 36 of title 38, United States Code, for use in connection with a registered apprenticeship program;

(B) will make a good faith effort to obtain approval for educational assistance described in subparagraph (A) for, at a minimum, each program location that employs or recruits a veteran or other individual eligible for educational assistance under chapters 30 through 36 of title 38, United States Code; and

(C) will not deny the application of a qualified candidate who is a veteran or other individual eligible for educational assistance described in subparagraph (A) for the purpose of avoiding making a good faith effort to obtain approval as described in subparagraph (B);

(2) in accordance with paragraphs (5) and (12) of section 29.5(b) of title 29, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the day before the date of enactment of this Act), require the program sponsor, to the extent practicable, to provide standards that contain provisions to grant advanced standing or credit, and provide increased wages commensurate to such standing or credit, for any veteran or other individual eligible for educational assistance under chapters 30 through 36 of title 38, United States Code, who—

(A) is enrolled in the registered apprenticeship program; and

(B)(i) has a demonstrated competence applicable to the apprenticeship occupation; or (ii) has acquired experience, training, or skills through military service that is applicable to the apprenticeship occupation; and

(3) when the Secretary approves the registered apprenticeship program, provide a copy of the program's certificate of registration to the State approving agency designated under chapter 36 of title 38, United States Code, in the State where the program is located.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. PETERS. I know of no further debate on this bill, as amended.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (S. 760), as amended, was passed, as follows:

S. 760

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Support for Veterans in Effective Apprenticeships Act of 2019".

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(b) ADDITIONAL REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, for any program applying to become a registered apprenticeship program on or after the date that is 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall—

(1) acquire from the program sponsor a written assurance that the sponsor—

(A) is aware of the availability of educational assistance for a veteran or other individual eligible under chapters 30 through 36 of title 38, United States Code, for use in connection with a registered apprenticeship program;

(B) will make a good faith effort to obtain approval for educational assistance described in subparagraph (A) for, at a minimum, each program location that employs or recruits a veteran or other individual eligible for educational assistance under chapters 30 through 36 of title 38, United States Code; and

(C) will not deny the application of a qualified candidate who is a veteran or other individual eligible for educational assistance described in subparagraph (A) for the purpose of avoiding making a good faith effort to obtain approval as described in subparagraph (B);

(2) in accordance with paragraphs (5) and (12) of section 29.5(b) of title 29, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the day before the date of enactment of this Act), require the program sponsor, to the extent practicable, to provide standards that contain provisions to grant advanced standing or credit, and provide increased wages commensurate to such standing or credit, for any veteran or other individual eligible for educational assistance under chapters 30 through 36 of title 38, United States Code, who—

(A) is enrolled in the registered apprenticeship program; and

(B)(i) has a demonstrated competence applicable to the apprenticeship occupation; or

(ii) has acquired experience, training, or skills through military service that is applicable to the apprenticeship occupation; and

(3) when the Secretary approves the registered apprenticeship program, provide a copy of the program's certificate of registration to the State approving agency designated under chapter 36 of title 38, United States Code, in the State where the program is located.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA TRADE
AGREEMENT

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, there is something we can do in Congress today, right now, right this very minute, that would lift a burden and provide peace of mind for millions of people across this great country.

As we all busy ourselves making holiday plans, Iowa's farmers and manufacturers are struggling to confidently look to the future. Many of the tools they need to feel confident and secure in the months ahead are laid out in the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. The USMCA trade agreement was signed by President Trump 369 days ago—369 days ago. That is over 1 year ago.

Speaker PELOSI and her House colleagues have had more than enough time to pass this important agreement. Yet they have failed to do so. Instead, House Democrats are fixated on impeaching the President. Let's not forget, though, when the House Democrats decided to go down this impeachment path, the American people were guaranteed that the House Democrats would be able to walk and chew gum at the same time. They promised that they could process this impeachment inquiry while continuing to do the work of the people. Well, folks, there is not much walking and chewing gum going on. Instead, that gum seems to be stuck under some park bench somewhere. That is where we are today, while millions of Americans whose livelihoods are tied to trade wait for the Democrats to get serious.

It is really unthinkable that USMCA is not already ratified by the United States. Folks, the USMCA is written. It is signed. It is agreed to by our partners. All we have to do is vote to pass it. It really is that simple. As I mentioned, it has been over 1 year since the trade agreement was signed. That means Iowa farmers have now gone through an entire cycle of planting, harvesting, and selling their crops without a finalized trade agreement with our two biggest trade partners. Yes, they are our two biggest trade partners—Mexico and Canada.

I spent all year crisscrossing Iowa to visit all of my 99 counties. I do that every year, just as Senator GRASSLEY

does, and not once did I hear someone say: Hey, Senator ERNST, let's wait on the USMCA.

It was quite the opposite. Whether I was at one of my 35 townhalls that I held just last year or during a farmer roundtable or a visit to a small manufacturer, I heard consistently and across the board that Iowans want USMCA right now. They want it now. These hard-working folks know the impact the USMCA will have on our Iowa economy and the U.S. economy as a whole. There is no reason Iowans should have to wait any longer. There is no reason the American workers shouldn't have the certainty that they need.

My House colleagues have not been able to offer any reasonable explanation for their inaction. I beg to say, though, folks, that it is because of who sits in the White House, and it would be a sad reality that, once again, Democrats would choose to put their own politics ahead of what is best for the American people. The USMCA is not partisan. It is not about President Trump. It is about what is best for hard-working Iowans. It is what is best for the American people.

The work has been done for Congress. The trade agreement has been written. All we have to do is say yes for the American people. That is it. It is so simple. Let's get serious. Let's do the simple task that folks back home are asking us to do, and that is to pass the USMCA.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise today alongside my Republican colleagues to once again voice my strong support for the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement. This agreement has been on the minds of Nebraskans for well over a year now.

Nebraska and rural America as a whole were dealt a tough hand in 2019. However, every time that I meet with Nebraska's farm families, ranchers, ag producers, and manufacturers, they reassure me that they can endure these challenges. They will sacrifice short-term anxiety for long-term certainty and predictability, but they need to know that there is going to be a light at the end of this tunnel. One important thing Congress can do to meet their needs is simple—pass the USMCA. This agreement is a victory for Nebraska and for America.

I will give you a glimpse into what this means for my State. Currently, Canada and Mexico receive 44 percent of Nebraska's total exports. In 2017 alone, our State sent nearly \$900 million of ag products to Mexico and nearly \$450 million of ag products to Canada. These exports include our world-class corn, soybeans, ethanol, and beef. As I have said before, America's heart beats in the same rhythm as agriculture. When our ag producers succeed, entire communities reap the benefits.

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture reports that our State's \$6.4 billion in agricultural exports in 2017 led to nearly \$8.2 billion in additional economic activity in our State. That is why it is so important that Nebraska's top two markets, Mexico and Canada, are protected. We all know that the USMCA is the product of bipartisan good-faith work. Both sides agree that this deal not only updates but strengthens our environmental responsibilities, and it places enforceable labor obligations at the core of the agreement.

All former Secretaries of Agriculture since the Reagan administration, both Republicans and Democrats, have voiced their strong support. Even the Washington Post editorial board conceded that the deal is "a real improvement over the status quo."

Last July, a group of 14 House Democrats sent a letter to Speaker PELOSI urging her to move forward with USMCA immediately. The President of Mexico made his own plea to the Speaker in a letter last week. Canada is still waiting for us to act. The senior Senator from Iowa noted that a deal between House Democrats and the Trump administration must be struck this week if ratification of the USMCA is to take effect this year. Time is running out. Meanwhile, House Democrats are distracted by impeachment proceedings when they should be focused on passing this very meaningful agreement.

In the final weeks of 2019, we will see if the needs of hard-working men and women in the heartland take priority over political theater. I urge my colleagues to follow through on our Nation's priorities and end the months of needless stalling. We must act now. The passage of USMCA would be an incredible win for Nebraska, and it would be an undeniable victory for America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I come to the Chamber today to rise with my colleagues to talk about the USMCA, or the United States-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement.

But before I talk about the vote that I hope is in this Chamber on fairly short order, I would like to go back to December of 1993. In December of 1993, President Clinton signed NAFTA. A month later, it was ratified, and, to be honest with you, it started a period of time in North Carolina where we suffered. We had a challenge to actually determine how we were going to react to a very different North Carolina, where there are textiles and a number of other industries that suffered initially under the NAFTA implementation. But today, North Carolina is one of the greatest benefactors of NAFTA. As a matter of fact, we are one of the top States in the country for job creation and commerce, and Canada and Mexico are our two most important export markets.

The problem is, NAFTA was implemented in 1994. I think that was back when the Backstreet Boys were topping the charts and MC Hammer was popular. It was a long, long time ago. It is time to modernize it. It was before the internet was even invented.

We have so many opportunities to modernize our trade relationship with our two most important trade partners, and the USMCA is the opportunity to do that. While it only took about a month to ratify the NAFTA agreement—knowing that there was a lot of work to be done before we completely benefited from it—we waited a year to ratify an agreement that will be immediately beneficial to the American economy. It will create more than 170,000 new jobs and \$70 billion a year in additional economic activity, putting us on a level playing field.

Our automotive industry, which has grown over the last 20 years, with several automotive manufacturing facilities in the South, and many businesses in my State support it.

It will open up the markets for our farmers. North Carolina is the ninth largest agriculture economy in the United States, with nearly \$90 billion a year in agriculture products. We want those markets open in Canada and Mexico so that we can grow our farm economy in North Carolina.

We also want to recognize that the USMCA agreement is a very, very important step in getting China to come to terms with fair trade with the United States. When we settle an agreement with two of our most important trade partners, then, China will take notice and they will follow the President's lead and understand that we no longer are going to allow them to compete unfairly.

There are provisions in the USMCA that I hear Speaker PELOSI talking about that, frankly, give me some concern. The House is entitled to make changes to the baseline agreement that both the Mexican Government and the Canadian Government have ratified, as proposed and as signed by the President. They give me concern, and we hope that Speaker PELOSI will keep to the baseline agreement.

But now we have to get to work to get this agreement ratified so these kinds of things continue to be positive stories that come out of North Carolina and positive stories that come out of Nebraska and Iowa and across this Nation. There is no downside to this agreement. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons I know there is no downside is that there are dozens of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle in the House who are prepared to vote for it in the form in which the President will sign.

This is a very, very important agreement. I do have to agree with my colleagues in that the only reason I can imagine we didn't have this agreement ratified last year was due to the focus on all things impeachment. This is a good deal. I have no doubt that if

President Clinton had signed this agreement in 1993, it would have been ratified a month later. Yet we have waited a year for this agreement to get any airtime in the House Chamber.

We need the USMCA signed today. We need the USMCA put into place so that we can realize the immediate economic advantage for hard-working farmers, for small businesses, and for the 170,000 new jobs that will be created so that we continue this economic recovery that started with tax reform and regulatory reform.

This is another step in the right direction, and no reasonable Member of Congress should be holding off on what is a great decision on the President's part. It is a great decision, and it is a great policy for the American people. It is going to help my farmers in North Carolina, and it is going to help my small businesses. It is going to continue to make the U.S. economy the envy of the world.

I ask Speaker PELOSI and my colleagues in the House to get to work. You can walk and chew gum. Go ahead and focus on impeachment if you want to, but from time to time, why don't you take some Chamber time and some of your resources to do right by the American people. That is what the USMCA does, and that is what we need the House to do. I guarantee you, when it comes to the Senate, we will quickly send it to the President's desk.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, once again, I rise to voice support for the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

The time to pass the USMCA is now. This agreement will increase exports, expand consumer choice, raise wages, and boost innovation throughout North America and especially here in the United States.

It is clear that the USMCA is good for the country and good for our economy. The U.S. International Trade Commission estimates that the USMCA will raise the GDP by nearly \$63 billion and create more than 175,000 jobs in the United States.

No one knows agriculture better than American farmers and ranchers, and technology has made them more efficient than ever. They have maintained an ag trade surplus for the last 50 years by exporting the best products around the world. American agriculture needs access to foreign markets to reach its full potential.

The same is true for my State of North Dakota, which is a powerhouse in terms of ag product. We shipped \$4.5 billion worth of ag products around the globe in 2017, which made us the country's ninth largest exporter of ag goods. Our farmers and ranchers depend on free and fair trade in order to sell the highest quality, lowest cost food supply to the world.

We lead the Nation in the production of a variety of crops, including that of

hard red spring wheat. Every summer, about 7.5 million acres—one-fifth of North Dakota's farmable acres—are carpeted with rows of wheat.

Currently, Canada automatically downgrades imports of U.S. wheat to the lowest designation—for animals only—regardless of the quality of the wheat. We grow the highest quality wheat in the world, and this unfair trade practice puts growers at a disadvantage when sending wheat to Canada.

Having access to Canadian markets is a big win for growers, for a quarter of our State's wheat is grown within 50 miles of a Canadian grain handling facility. By eliminating the automatic downgrade of U.S. wheat, growers have access to an additional market where they will receive a premium price for their high-quality products. The USMCA ensures that North Dakota wheat growers will be compensated fairly when selling their products in Canada.

These are the types of provisions that are provided for in the agreement—making it very clear that we need to get it passed.

In addition to wheat, U.S. dairy products will see increased access in the Canadian market, which is estimated to be worth more than a quarter of a billion dollars. The agreement also provides for increased access to the Canadian market for other ag products, like poultry exports—chicken, eggs, and turkey—as well as others.

These examples are just some of the many benefits for American agriculture in the USMCA. By maintaining all zero-tariff provisions on ag products, the USMCA will secure critical market access for U.S. farmers and ranchers. Canada and Mexico are critical markets for U.S. agriculture, and passing the USMCA will give our producers certainty that these markets will remain open for business.

Our farmers and ranchers are facing real challenges right now. Severe weather has destroyed crops or has made it impossible to harvest, and unjustified retaliatory tariffs have disrupted markets and driven prices lower. That is why Congress needs to approve the USMCA.

Now more than ever, farmers and ranchers depend on stability in our trading relationships with Canada and Mexico—our Nation's two largest trading partners. The failure to ratify this agreement would be detrimental to agriculture producers across the country, including in the Presiding Officer's home State.

I believe the USMCA has strong, bipartisan support in the Senate, but the implementing legislation must originate in the House. That is why I urge my colleagues in the House to do what is best for the American people: take up and pass the USMCA as soon as possible. That means agreeing to the provisions in the USMCA and putting it on the floor for a vote in the House to get this process started. We need the leadership in the House to agree to take

the implementing legislation and put it to a vote on the floor of the House. I think it would pass with a large bipartisan majority. Then and only then can we take up that legislation here in the Senate, which, I believe, would pass with a large bipartisan majority. We are ready to go.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, farmers and ranchers are in a tough spot. There are a lot of families who are on the edge of bankruptcy in my State and in ag country more broadly. As we get closer to Christmas and to the new year without having a trade deal with Canada and Mexico, the situation is getting bleaker.

Let's be blunt about this. By needlessly stonewalling the USMCA trade agreement, Speaker NANCY PELOSI and the House Democrats are taking Nebraska's agriculture hostage. This is petty, stupid politics at its worst.

The USMCA trade deal is a free-trade win for our farmers and ranchers, and they desperately need this win right now. With hard work and grit, Nebraskans have cultivated one of the most powerful agricultural economies in the history of the world. We literally feed the world, and we do it with free trade because we grow so much more food than we could ever consume. We need export markets, and lots of people around the world want to be consuming our ag products.

It is pretty simple: Trade with Canada and Mexico is a win-win-win. In 2018, Mexico and Canada bought more than \$40 billion worth of American agricultural products. The U.S. International Trade Commission expects the USMCA to increase that trade by more than \$33 billion. The USMCA trade deal is designed to reinforce those partnerships in ways that make sense for an economy that has changed a lot since NAFTA was passed in the 1990s.

In the 1990s, "Seinfeld" was still on TV; we still watched movies on VHS tape; and we took our pictures with these things of which the pages probably don't know—cameras that had film. I will be honest. At my house, we still watch "Seinfeld," but we have happily moved on from VHS tapes. My teenage daughters set us up on Hulu streaming, but I can't make the remote work.

Over the last 20 years, we have seen a massive digital revolutionary change in nearly every sector of our economy. Farmers are using new tech to increase our productivity and to get more out of the most fertile land on God's green Earth than people have ever assumed possible. The USMCA trade deal makes that kind of basic improvement in our trading relationships with our neighbors, and we need that in this rapidly changing, evolving, and developing economy. For example, it scraps the old rules about importing cars that still have cassette tape players. CHUCK GRASSLEY, apparently, still has a car

that has a cassette tape player, but he is proud of it, so we won't make fun of him here.

Passing the USMCA would secure long-term stability in our trade agreements with our partners across North America, and it would also send a signal to other potential partners around the world that the United States is open for business. We need to bring Japan, the European Union, and others to the negotiating table, and passing the USMCA would strengthen our position significantly in setting up those trade agreements. Time is running out.

If we don't pass the USMCA this year, we are going to send a very different signal to our potential partners. If Speaker PELOSI and the House Democrats can't get their act together on the USMCA, they will be telling the whole world that we may or may not be open for business—it all depends on short-term political posturing. That is the message they are sending now, and that is the message that might be cemented if this calendar year ends without our passing the USMCA. Try running a convenience store like that, and you will be out of business in a month.

A lot of folks in San Francisco and New York City may not think much about beans and corn prices, but every farmer and rancher in Nebraska is beyond baffled that this no-brainer trade deal hasn't been passed yet. It is simply in the best long-term interests of everyone involved in this conversation. This is not something that should be slipping beyond this year; this is something that should pass now. We should call the vote on Christmas morning if that is what it takes. The Congress should not be leaving DC without passing the USMCA.

Time is running out, and we don't want to let our farmers and ranchers face 2020 with the uncertainty and the confusion they now feel. These Nebraskans want to do business; they want to trade; and we want to win.

Congress is the place where Americans deliberate about the long-term challenges we need to face for the future of our country, but instead of deliberation, right now what they see when they turn on their TVs or pick up their newspapers is just vicious partisanship and short-term posturing. The American people deserve better than this.

The clown show in the House of Representatives shouldn't bring everything to a grinding halt. It shouldn't stop us from doing right for farmers and ranchers. The USMCA trade agreement would pass by large majorities if introduced on the House floor, and I speculate that it would get between 85 and 90 votes on this floor. Obviously, we can't take it up until the House votes. The House would pass it with a big majority. That means only NANCY PELOSI stands in the way of USMCA's certainty for the world's greatest producers. Everyone knows this, and Speaker PELOSI should be scheduling the vote.

We have only 28 days left in 2019, but that is plenty of time to vote on the USMCA. That is plenty of time to get a win for our farmers and ranchers.

Speaker PELOSI, please schedule the vote.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of John L. Sinatra, Jr., of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of New York.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Sinatra nomination?

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Arkansas (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 75, nays 18, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 378 Ex.]

YEAS—75

Alexander	Feinstein	Peters
Baldwin	Fischer	Portman
Barrasso	Gardner	Reed
Bennet	Graham	Risch
Blackburn	Grassley	Roberts
Blunt	Hassan	Romney
Boozman	Hawley	Rosen
Braun	Hoeben	Rubio
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Capito	Inhofe	Schumer
Cardin	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Carper	Jones	Scott (SC)
Casey	Kaine	Shaheen
Cassidy	Kennedy	Shelby
Collins	King	Sinema
Coons	Lankford	Stabenow
Cornyn	Leahy	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Lee	Tester
Cotton	Manchin	Thune
Cramer	McConnell	Tillis
Crapo	McSally	Toomey
Cruz	Moran	Warner
Daines	Murphy	Whitehouse
Enzi	Paul	Wicker
Ernst	Perdue	Young

NAYS—18

Blumenthal	Heinrich	Murray
Brown	Hirono	Schatz
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Smith
Duckworth	Markey	Udall
Durbin	Menendez	Van Hollen
Gillibrand	Merkley	Wyden