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Boozman Bulletin: It's Time for Congress to Pass the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement

The world is more connected than ever. Fair trade agreements have become increasingly important to Arkansas's economy. Access to global markets is necessary, not just for the large corporations that call Arkansas home, but also for small and medium-sized businesses looking to expand their operations and footprints.

With a level playing field, Arkansas's agriculture, manufacturing and small businesses can compete with anyone around the globe. The U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) is the type of mutually beneficial trade agreement we need to pursue to help Arkansas's economy grow.

According to the Arkansas World Trade Center, Natural State goods and services are exported to 181 countries, but Canada and Mexico combined for over one-third of our exports in 2017. Our exports to these two countries added \$2.1 billion to Arkansas's economy that same year. Nearly 69,000 jobs in our state are dependent on trade with Canada and another 41,000 jobs are tied to trade with Mexico.

I recently joined my colleagues on the Senate floor to outline the importance of passing the USMCA because of the tremendous economic benefits the agreement would have on the Arkansas and the national economies.





In my discussions with farmers on how we can help, the same mantra is often repeated—they prefer trade over aid. While they appreciate the president’s efforts to ease the pain during these trade standoffs, what they really need are more markets in which to sell their products. They understand that increased trade is the way to create a better long-term outlook for their operations.

USMCA is a 21st Century Trade agreement that:

- Rebalances trade to support manufacturing
- Supports America’s small businesses
- Strengthens U.S. trade in agriculture

Last month, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer told my colleagues on the Senate Finance Committee “the USMCA is the strongest, most momentous trade agreement in U.S. history. It is the gold standard for rules on the digital economy, financial services, intellectual property, etc. It will help stop the outflow of manufacturing jobs and return many to the United States.”

Our neighbors to the north and south are our natural allies and trading partners. The president and his team worked hard to get Canada and Mexico to the negotiating table to formalize a more mutually beneficial agreement. That hard work has paid off in the form of the USMCA. Now, Congress has a responsibility to see it through to the end.

Quick Takes:

- **Register for Disaster Assistance:** Federal resources are available to Arkansans impacted by the devastating Arkansas River flooding. The deadline to register for disaster assistance is **August 7**. Residents of Arkansas, Conway, Crawford, Desha, Faulkner, Jefferson, Logan, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Sebastian and Yell counties are eligible to apply for individual assistance that may include money to help pay for temporary housing, emergency home repairs or other disaster-related expenses. For more information on recovery resources and how to apply [click here](#).
- **Advancing New Highway Bill:** On Tuesday, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works unanimously approved [America’s Transportation Infrastructure Act \(ATIA\) of 2019](#). This legislation provides resources and flexibility for states to build safer and more modern highway, rail and bridge systems. The bill includes reforms I helped secure that will cut bureaucratic red tape, streamline review processes and improve safety in rural America. It also outlines the future for [modernizing the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System](#).
- **Supporting Rural Hospitals:** Hospitals in rural states have long been disadvantaged by the Medicare Area Wage Index, but a proposed rule by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

(CMS) would change that. I led the Arkansas Congressional Delegation in [writing a letter](#) to CMS Administrator Seema Verma, supporting the rule that would allow rural hospitals to receive increased Medicare reimbursements.

- **Unlocking the Veteran Suicide Crisis:** In a recent Senate Veterans Affairs (VA) Committee hearing, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie [expressed his support](#) for the [IMPROVE Wellbeing for Veterans Act](#), legislation I introduced to create a VA grant program to leverage veteran-serving nonprofits and other community networks in order to reduce veteran suicides. Congress has increased funding to the VA for suicide prevention, but tragically money alone has not decreased the number of veterans who take their own lives. This bill will allow the VA and its partners to identify which suicide prevention efforts are having the most impact so that resources can be concentrated appropriately.
- **Protecting Whistleblowers:** The Senate unanimously passed a resolution marking July 30 as National Whistleblower Protection Day. As a member of the Senate Whistleblower Protection Caucus, I am committed to promoting a culture that supports the brave individuals who are willing to speak out against fraud, waste and abuse. In early July, I introduced legislation to correct the VA's practice of wrongly charging disabled veterans a home loan funding fee they were explicitly exempt from. I am thankful that [whistleblowers shed light on this problem](#) so we can fix it and reimburse veterans improperly charged this fee.
- **Connect on Social Media:** Stay up to date with what I'm doing for Arkansans via social media. You can find me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).



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