

**US Senator Maria Cantwell**

**Rapid-Response Press Conference on Federal Courts Striking Down Trump Tariffs**

**May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Senator Cantwell Remarks**

**[VIDEO]**

**Sen. Cantwell:** Thank you, Barry, and thank you Commissioner Felleman for coming down and talking about how the Port of Seattle is being affected by the trade disputes that we're seeing from this administration.

First of all, Washington is one of the most trade dependent states in our country, and so any policy that basically curtails the economic opportunities, affects all of us in our community. Two courts have ruled against President Trump's tariffs. They basically have said he's exceeded his authority.

For almost 24 hours, consumers, just like Barry, heard that good news and thought maybe we were having a reprieve against these terrible actions that are costing consumers more. The US Constitution gave Congress the power to set tariffs and regulate foreign commerce. The Court of International Trade gave the President 10 days to make changes, to implement an order to end these tariffs.

But instead, the Trump administration is trying to appeal, and the President continues to push for additional tariffs on semiconductors, on pharmaceuticals, and other sectors. I believe we should be doing trade agreements instead. We should be building alliances and addressing the shortcomings of some of the challenges we face, but not putting tariffs on that are hard to get off, and oftentimes can lead to years and years of trade wars.

The President is on the wrong path for our economy. By bypassing Congress and skirting these rules, we have seen the impacts on tariffs on small businesses, just like Barry mentioned. This is uncertainty for them and their business. It's higher cost for consumers. And for a trade dependent economy like ours, it means that we will have less dollars flowing through our ports.

Businesses cannot place orders because they don't know what the costs were going to be. There is an extra burden on the small businesses who can't afford to pay the tariffs on goods that they haven't sold yet. And manufacturers can't order parts because prices are fluctuating wildly in the supply chain. That means exporters do not know how foreign trading partners will even retaliate against them for shelf space.

So, American businesses need a rules-based trade system. That means American families would have the certainty, not chaos and not higher prices. We know this: that when you start trade wars, usually that means you end up closing markets. We want to see the opening of markets. We need more opportunities for US exporters and the trade alliance that was done here between the Port of Seattle and Tacoma, leveraged that ability for us to reach more markets.

95% of the world consumers live outside the United States, and if we want to be competitive with other countries, we need to be fighting to open markets, not a fight on retaliatory tariffs that are causing us great hardship and are costing us that important shelf space.

I hope Congress and the courts keep stepping up the process of saying no to this trade chaos. I know that the President's actions, the court has basically said, misconstrued his authority and exceeded his authority. This is very important, because the US Court of International Trade and the [US District Court for the District of Columbia] also basically said that that exceeding of the authority was not given to him by Congress.

I hope my colleagues will continue to pay attention, and I hope they will also act on legislation by myself and Senator Grassley to make sure this issue is clear once and for all. I'm happy to answer any questions.

## Q&A

### [VIDEO]

**Reporter:** [UNINTELLGIBLE] do you have any numbers at all that'll tell us about how it'll affect the port?

**Felleman:** Well, there's a pretty linear relationship between the lack of container movements and the jobs associated with it because the truck drivers only get paid per container they move. So we have 4000 drivers between the Seattle and Tacoma ports. So when we have blank sailings, and we had four of them just last week -- meaning they just didn't arrive -- that's no jobs.

And so the same thing with a longshore. And so we are looking at a pretty linear relationship that right now, with a 25% year over year decline, it looks pretty bad.

**Sen. Cantwell:** How many people work a ship?

**Felleman:** Well, the number of shifts per -- it depends on how many gangs they have to move, how many containers are moving at one time.

**Reporter:** Senator Cantwell, if the court's uphold the decision today, what's the next move for Congress to try to--?

**Sen. Cantwell:** Well, if they uphold the court process and basically say that he did act arbitrarily [and exceeded his authority], then the Administration will be forced to change that policy. And we think this is so important, regardless of who's president.

And now that we see how much damage can be done by a president coming in and acting arbitrarily, I think Congress still needs to step in. But the fact that the courts, basically -- two courts, have said he acted arbitrarily and he exceeded his . . . [authority], it shows you the danger of not clarifying this because we don't want to see this kind of havoc again, particularly on small businesses.

**Reporter:** Are you disappointed with the --

**Sen. Cantwell:** Well, the stay means that they will have until June 9<sup>th</sup> to review the details. But we know this: that it is wreaking havoc on the US economy, and because we represent such a trade-dependent part of the United States, and we want more trade, we're really worried about the alliance building that will happen without us participating.

We're worried that other partners will go do deals and leave our products off the shelf, or even our competitiveness with Prince Rupert could be affected. If all of the sudden, Canada and other places are doing more deals together. If it accelerates, we don't want to see our ports affected as they are now. And I don't know, Fred, if you have a point about that?

**Felleman:** Her point about Prince Rupert is particularly relevant. Many people think that we're competing with the LA-Long Beach megaports, but in fact, Canada is our largest competitor. And Canada, being a sparsely populated country, they're primarily serving our Midwest.

So, they bring cargo in without these tariffs, and then come all the way across the border and then conserve Chicago and the whole distribution center of the Midwest. So this could completely divert traffic. We are working very hard to try to close this loophole. But you know, once you're in the northwest, whether you go a couple degrees north or south, you're still going to the same market.

**Reporter:** Senator, is there some sort of coalition [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

**Sen. Cantwell:** Well, we're definitely trying to say that the trade economy of the future is what is the big economic opportunity for the United States. We love the fact that we're so innovative, and we love the fact that we are leading the way on all sorts of new sectors that are important to the economy.

But when you think about it, you still have to import those component parts, or you still have to make semiconductors effective. We just had a hearing recently where we showed that the price of semiconductor inputs [for building semiconductor manufacturing facilities] have gone up 6% in cost. So that makes us less competitive to other places.

So, we want to see the trade regime -- we want a rules-based system that everybody understands, and we want to open up more opportunities. And so we think that talking to places around the United States -- states that have coastal economies generate about 80% of the US economic output. So, we're talking about some very important economies. And we do think that those places should be speaking up more about the trade situation and the fact that it really could hurt their state's economies.

**Felleman:** And if I could just add, though, there is the American Association of Port Authorities, that is the national association that is carrying this torch, and that there are ports all around the country that it's not -- it's a bipartisan issue.

While the coastal states tend to be bluer, we're moving goods throughout the country. So this is something that we have a broad coalition of support, and needs to be getting through to this administration: that our country prospers when we can compete in a global marketplace.

**Reporter:** Can you speak on that bilateral [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

**Sen. Cantwell:** Yeah, it's so important the -- we had the soybean industry testify before the Senate Finance Committee, and they were talking about why this is so important to them -- that last time the tariffs went into effect in the first Trump Administration, that they lost market share in China, it plummeted. But they never recovered to the original -- I think it was like 56% or something of the market -- so they never recovered. And so their point is: don't do these kind of trade wars, where at the end you lose out because in the middle of the trade war, other people got access to the market.

And so I think that the farm community is a particular coalition of people who care about this in the Midwest, and that's why the bipartisan effort by myself and Senator Grassley has been effective. And I've heard some things that people have said while we're on recess, but we'll have to see now how our colleagues interpret these decisions.

**Felleman:** Just one point is that these trade relationships are sticky, and that when you move to another market, once you set up these supply chains, they don't all come back. And so this is a very dangerous period of time because those folks are going to move goods, right? And they're happy -- they're looking at Africa, they're looking at other places where they can both import and export.

So, if we're not seen as a reliable partner, it doesn't mean that trade doesn't continue, it just doesn't go through our gateway or our country. So, severe challenges, and right now it's uncertainty more than anything else.

**[UNINTELLIGIBLE QUESTION]**

**Sen. Cantwell:** Well, I do think that trade is -- with 95% of consumers outside the United States -- is this big economic opportunity. And as we look to counter China on certain issues, one thing is really important: to have great trade relationships, particularly right now, I think, with South America. So we should be doing that, not curtailing our trade activities, increasing our trade agreements and trade alliances. Okay, thank you all very much.