U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

Port of Grays Harbor Terminal 4 Grand Opening

July 31, 2026

[VIDEO]

Sen. Cantwell: Well, hello everyone, and thank you, Leonard, for that introduction. I just have a question: do you have to be over six-foot-four to be the executive director of the port around here? Gary, good to know you're in the audience too.

Well, what a day! What a day in Grays Harbor, celebrating an unbelievable success and investment by a lot of people that are going to pay off not just for this part of Washington State, not just for the state of Washington, but for the whole U.S. economy. Thank you all very, very much.

I want to thank Commission President Stan Pinnick. Thank you. I know you got 115 years right on your hat. There is that your age now, or are you just…? I think you're making a point, I think I think you're making a point. This is a long-term investment for this community, and it's paying off.

We are clearly in the era of the Pacific, and you're on the Pacific, and by the people who are here today, we are making that Pacific connection pay for people all across the United States. So thank you to the Port commissioners, thank you to Tom Quigg, Phil Papac, and many other people.

I also want to thank AGP CEO Chris Schaffer and [COO] Lou Rickers, as well as William Paape, you can't do this without MARAD. Thank you so much for that big investment from the federal government.

I'd also like to thank our local legislators who were here: [Mike] Chapman, Jeff Wilson, Steve Tharinger, Adam Bernbaum, Jeff Holy, Representative Walsh, the Quinault Nation and Councilwoman Brittany Bryson, Commissioners Rick Hole and Georgia Miller, and State Department of Agriculture [Director] Derek Sandison, and obviously all the members of the various communities who are here from the city councils of Aberdeen, Hoquiam, Cosmopolis, and Montesano.

And big, big, big, big shout out to Billy Swor, the president of local ILWU 24. Where are you? Where are you? Way, way, way in the back. Oh, there you go. Thank you, Billy. Thank you, thank you.

And we're here with my longtime dear friend and our very own federal maritime commissioner serving our nation on important federal maritime strategic port strategy, our own Max Vekich. Max, thank you for being here.

Now, to me, you know, this all became very simple years ago when I was standing at the Port of Vancouver, and somebody said, "This is the largest grain elevator in the United States," and I said, "Why is this the largest grain — at that moment, anyway — why is this the largest grain elevator in the United States?"

And the person on the ground said, "Well, that's because if Asia wants to eat beef, we got to sell them grain." And so it was clear to me then that we needed to continue to make investments in what Grays Harbor calls global connections for local impacts.

And we worked hard. When I became the chairman of the Commerce Committee, the number one priority I had was to increase the Port Infrastructure Development Grant Program, and we got a 200% increase in that program in the infrastructure bill just several years ago.

That was because we understood that, as I just say in the other Washington, ports are us. It's just as simple as that: ports are us. That's what we do. That's what makes our economies. That’s what helped make the economy for our nation, and that is the investment.

So we are here at the largest exporter now of soymeal on the West Coast, with products coming from states like South Dakota and Nebraska. And last year [the Port of Grays Harbor] handled a record number of automobiles, and those achievements reflect the hard work of longshoremen, truck drivers, rail workers, farmers, manufacturers, and small businesses all across America.

And as I said, those ILWU [Local] 24 workers are making sure that a soybean farmer a thousand miles away in South Dakota can compete with Asia, and that is what we're doing here today. So this $25.5 million [federal] investment that helps this project is going to attract over $100 million in private sector development, and that is why you put federal dollars on the table, and that's what you sent me to Washington to do.

So, we're doubling the rail infrastructure. That means ships spend less time waiting, cargo moves more efficiently, businesses become more competitive, workers have more opportunities, and our economy grows.

That was already mentioned by Leonard about reliable supply chains and why open markets matter. It is why we continue to fight for freight funding in the United States Senate. I have been dubbed “Senator Freight.” Don't care. I'll take it any day of the week. I'll be Senator Freight.

We are now working hard to pass another infrastructure investment bill because we have to continue to make port infrastructure investment, and I'm going to use this project to tell all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle: this is what America gets and American workers get when you make port infrastructure investment.

Today is a celebration. It is a celebration of local communities, of business, of labor, of ports, [and] of federal partnerships. It is about vision over division. It is about connecting Washington and the western United States to a world economy for generations to come.

So, Stan, you might have to add a few more years onto that hat for the future, but this is a huge success. Congratulations to everyone.