

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell
Floor Speech on Trump Administration

March 4, 2025

[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: I rise to speak today on important public policy issues related to my state's economy, and appreciate the opportunity to follow our Senior Senator, Senator Murray, who is articulating the impact of some of these so important public policy issues on the State of Washington.

Trade is the lifeblood of the State of Washington and our economy. Farmers in my state export \$7.5 billion worth of agriculture products a year. That was the number from 2023. \$7.5 billion. So anytime somebody starts a trade war, I guarantee you, you're going to get our attention.

Under the President's trade war, the farmers in my state are going to be the first victims. Trump said to our farmers yesterday on Truth Social, quote, 'Tariffs will go on external products on April 2. Have fun!,' end quote.

Have fun? Have fun? When retaliatory tariffs strike our farmers, just as they did in the first Trump administration, it's not going to be fun, it's going to be a nightmare for our farmers. And many of the farmers in my state worry that they will be able to farm at all.

It's not like they're going to lose farmland. There are rich people, billionaires, software executives, who will buy farmland. We're going to lose farmers. I know this because we've already been through this trade war, with many of my farmers struggling to overcome the damage that was wrought during the first Trump administration.

The last time we went down this road, we lost the apple market because of retaliatory tariffs. We had a \$120 million market that basically collapsed, practically overnight, in India. And I traveled to India and worked hard over several years to lift those tariffs, and now we finally are back growing our exports exponentially, but the market still isn't fully recovered, and now people are questioning what's going to happen next.

I heard from grower in my state who said, quote, 'The alarms in ag are sounding. The band has stopped playing, and the last lifeboats are leaving the ship. We cannot endure another cycle similar to the one that was started seven years ago when tariffs were first put in place. And without meaningful, long-lasting solutions, you may very well be looking at the last generation of farm families,' end quote.

That's just one of my constituents. He doesn't sound like he's having fun. These family legacies, built on generations of work, cannot be lost in a trade war. You can't get them back once they're gone.

I hope my colleagues will slow down on this tariff tirade. Under Article One, Section Eight of the U.S. Constitution, Congress has the power to set duties and regulate foreign commerce. However, Congress has spent the last 80 years delegating its tariff authority to presidents.

You can say, okay, well, that might have been okay because previous Democrat and Republican Presidents worked to lower tariffs and to open up markets. I have voted for many of those trade agreements. But this President, I believe, is abusing this authority. He calls it an emergency. He's using the trade wars to supposedly force countries to do things like changing their border policies.

I believe it's time for Congress to start taking back some of that power and considering how we're going to protect the family farm.

We know this -- that in my state, families are paying more for groceries. They're paying more at the gas pump. They're paying more at electricity bills. And they are seeing the stock market plummet because as businesses grapple with Trump's unnecessary trade war, businesses are concerned about the long-term impacts of the supply chain and the cost of those tariffs.

The American people want to see the administration tackle inflation and the high cost of everything. When the President, President Trump was on the campaign trail, he talked about inflation. He said, quote, 'starting day one, we will end inflation and make sure that America makes affordable again and bring down prices on all goods,' end quote. Well, I don't think that's what's happening today.

The Wall Street Journal editorial board put it well this morning when they wrote quote, 'Trump takes the dumbest tariff plunge,' end quote. I agree. We don't need to be doing this.

These tariffs are attacks on groceries bought by every American. Canada is the largest exporter of meat to the United States, while 77% of fresh vegetables are imported from Mexico and 11% are imported from Canada. So costs are going up on every American who is buying, and that means they will also buy less.

The tariffs on Canada and Mexican goods that President Trump is planning would cost American families an estimated [up to \$2,000] per year. According to Anderson Economic Group, tariffs could raise the price of a new car as much as \$12,000. I'm pretty sure nobody has extra money for new car.

Housing costs -- one of the biggest drivers on inflation, but President Trump's tariffs would drive up the cost of construction material, making it even more expensive to address our housing shortage, slow our new home construction, and one analysis found that tariffs could push home construction up by four to six percent over the next 12 months.

I can tell you, we already have expensive housing in the Northwest. We can't afford another four to six percent. And the tariffs also create supply chain disruptions, making it harder to find alternative sources of materials, delaying projects that are already underway, and these short-term sticker shocks will put long-term pressure on housing affordability, making the problem worse -- not solving it.

Just last week, when people want to talk about GDP and where this is going, it's amazing that the Atlanta Fed was forecasting GDP growth over two percent for the first quarter of 2025. That's literally what this line here was discussing. That the consensus was two percent, and even the Fed was weighing in on that.

But we can see when we got to February, we fell off a cliff. We fell off a cliff. And why? Because now the Atlanta Fed is saying we had one swing of five percent in just one week. And now this drop is the representation of a cliff that President Trump is pushing the American economy over.

So, you can see they're going down to negative. Not just zero growth, but negative. Mr. President, we can't afford that, and we can't afford the stock market dropping 700 points yesterday.

The only way that we can work together is that if my colleagues here will start talking about these tariff issues. We don't need to weaken our institutions here; we need to strengthen them. And our colleagues need to work together to resolve these issues.

I would say too that as my colleagues start to plan how we deal with these budget issues, that we should also keep in mind that some of the cuts that these agencies have been facing are really the cuts to some of the most technical jobs the United States government has.

Whether you're talking about NOAA, or the National Weather Service, or the National Institutes of Health, or the National Science Foundation, or the U.S. Department of Agriculture -- they've all been targeted for reductions. These agencies are critical to our economic growth and to our security. And at a time when we are seeing more extreme weather events, or more floods, or more wildfires, why shouldn't we be investing more in weather forecasting, not less?

And when you look at NOAA workers who support our commercial, and recreation, and tribal fisheries -- they employ 1.7 million people, including thousands in the State of Washington. Why would you cut specialized workforce that are helping support the growth of GDP? Because you want to basically cut those technical workers at the same time you're putting on tariffs?

In 2023, the National Institute of Health awarded \$1.2 billion in highly competitive grants to the State of Washington -- 65 different organizations. This supported 12,000 jobs and generated \$3 billion in economic activity. But DOGE wants to cap the overhead expenses of research. University of Washington Medicine tells me that this would leave them with shortfalls and that they might have to stop clinical trials that are underway. You can't just stop medical research like it's a faucet.

Once halted, the research, the data, the clinical trials, the patients, the laboratories, the equipment, all that led to innovation -- will be lost. You think you just turn that back on? You know, these kinds of ideas sound great, but they're not well thought out. It's literally throwing tax dollars away.

Tonight, my guest at the State of the Union will be Dr. Paul Lange from the University of Washington. With support of federal funding, Dr. Lange helped develop early detection tests for prostate cancer. Because of these tests and other treatment breakthroughs, we have seen a decrease in the death rate from prostate cancer. From 1993 to 2022 it dropped by one half. Significant progress.

That is why we need research dollars to save lives. Similarly, Washington State University researchers actively test on novel drug treatment for advanced prostate cancer at Sharma Lab. If

its work is disrupted, they say that, ‘risk potentially is high, not being able to replace data, and endangering the ultimate viability of potentially lifesaving treatments,” end quote.

There are lives that might not be saved because of these budget cuts. So, it is time, Mr. President, that Congress gets involved, that we fight for the science that we believe will save lives, move our country forward and grow our GDP, and help our farmers by stopping these trade wars, and putting our farmers back in charge of growing an economy for the future.

I hope that we don't cut ARS funding that USDA depends on. I hope that we will give hope to our future constituents and the growth that we need to grow our economy instead of cutting our opportunity. I thank the President and I yield the floor.