

Transcript
Senator Maria Cantwell
Remarks on the Senate Floor
January 15, 2026

Sen. Cantwell: *Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to congratulate the appropriation colleagues who have got us to this point of voting today on final passage of three important appropriations bills.*

I want to congratulate specifically Senator Collins and Senator Murray from my home state of Washington. They've done an admirable job and certainly want to compliment Senator Murray for her hard work and attention on policies that affect our state, particularly in the areas of water. But we're here today because we want to say to our fellow colleagues, these are three important bills to preserving science and the role that science plays in moving our nation forward.

Last May, I hosted an online round table with Senator Van Hollen, a lead appropriator – and I thank him and the rest of the appropriators on the committee, both on the Democrat and Republican side – because we wanted to speak out about how federal agencies and scientists, including some from my state, were here to decry the impacts that we would see if the Trump administration was successful at cutting the National Science Foundation particularly, cutting NOAA, cutting NASA.

These participants made it clear that industry depends on strong partnerships with the government to conduct basic and applied science, and that they can't do it on their own. Important people also were convened in a group in June – meteorologists from around the country – to specifically home in on how cuts to the NOAA budget would endanger Americans on issues like peak hurricane and wildfire season.

And we called on the administration to restore the agencies to their full capacity. So [I'm] very happy that these three bills, I think, represent a win for science as was recently reported in the New York Times. But it also was specifically important for the science NOAA research budget: \$634 million [so] that NOAA can continue to improve weather forecasting and development [of] tools that actually save lives and save money.

I know my colleagues from all over the country are plagued by weather events. It could be a hurricane, it could be a tornado, it could be a flood. We obviously were just impacted in the Pacific Northwest, but we need the tools. We need new hurricane hunters. We need new radar systems. We need the meteorologists.

We need the people on the ground, like [what] happened in Texas, so that you can take weather information about how warmer events are creating more precipitation, and that

precipitation could lead to record flooding. We need the whole system to work with the emergency responders, and we need the ability to get people out of harm's way.

These bills also maintain NOAA's fishery funding and increase investment in salmon hatcheries and the Columbia River, and it protects the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund from being zeroed out. I see my colleague from Oregon here.

I know as an appropriator, he knows how well and important the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund is, just as my colleagues from Alaska, Oregon, California, Idaho and Montana know. The whole region knows how important these funds are.

Congress has rejected [the] administration's attempts in the NOAA budget to cut \$1.7 billion out of the NOAA budget. It literally wanted to slash the entire R&D arm of NOAA and slash the NOAA fisheries [budget] by 29% and these three bills today obviously reject that.

We're also sending a strong message that we believe in our scientists in other agencies, and I'll get to [NASA] in a minute. But just on this continued improvement of sensors and instruments, this bill invests in NOAA's critical research and life saving agencies.

During the last month of record flooding in my state, over 100,000 people were forced to evacuate their homes, and now 73 landslides have been reported. So these important reminders, like weather events, are why we sent a five point plan to the president saying funding for research, technology, tools, buoys and other information are important to modernizing the nation's weather forecasting capabilities.

In addition, as I mentioned, [there were] other agencies the President thought we should make massive cuts. Thank God our bipartisan efforts by appropriators and our colleagues represented by the earlier votes on these bills show that we don't agree with that.

We will double the request for funding for the National Science Foundation, and we support the NSF fundamental applied research investment in universities across our nation. This is important work in all sorts of medical devices, insulin pumps, pacemakers, important things for healthcare and for manufacturing competitiveness.

We also with this bill send a strong message that we stand by our NASA agency. This legislation funds [all] NASA mission area[s] and avoids jeopardizing our exploration of the moon and solar system. We're not going to put aviation safety at risk or leadership in aerospace technology such as advanced composites.

It restores NASA's budget from under \$19 billion, as proposed by the Trump administration, to \$24 billion to ensure that we can return to the moon before China and sustain America's presence there.

So, [I'm] very happy that all of these things are really important investments, generational investments in science programs, rejecting the cuts by the administration and instead fueling the innovation economy that is so important for America's competitiveness.

While I'm very happy, Mr. President, to celebrate these three bills, we also have more work to do. This week, it is clear that the economic numbers point to the fact that we are not lowering costs in America.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics said this week that consumer prices are up 2.7% higher than a year ago. It has been a full year since this administration has set in motion its economic policies, and now we know the prices of groceries are up 2.4%, the price of shelter is up 3.2%, the price of medical services up 3.5%, the price of electricity is up 6.7%, and the price of natural gas is up 10.8%.

So the reality is, is that tariffs are having an impact. They're adding to the sticker shock [on] American families, and they're affecting the price of everything from coffee to clothes to cameras to furniture.

A team of Harvard economists have been tracking retail prices using real time barcode data. So, one thing I want to show is just look at this chart that we are presenting here, "Tariffs Rising Prices for Americans." With January 2024 retail prices as a benchmark, you can see that during 2024 retail prices were trending down on both domestic goods and imported goods.

These two lines here—these two lines on domestic and imported goods were basically trending downward. This upper line domestic, imported goods. So, here we are all the way through 2024, these numbers are going down.

But all of the sudden in 2025 and particularly here in April, all of the sudden, the numbers for both imported and domestic products start going back up. All the way to where we are today. So, 2024 policies of the last administration driving prices down. All of the sudden, tariff implementation and these policies, prices now going back up.

This is when so-called 'Liberation Day' tariffs were announced. Americans started getting squeezed. I don't think they are feeling very liberated. This has been the centerpiece of the President's economic policies, and it remains, in my mind, a broken promise on trying to lower costs.

Inflation does remain a consistent problem. American businesses know it, American families know it, and they are being squeezed by it. So, I am hopeful the Supreme Court will act soon and help Americans by lowering the prices they're feeling because of the Trump

tariffs, and the fact that they are being imposed on manufacturers, on households, and consumers that are having an effect on our economy.

But I want Congress to act. I hope that as the Supreme Court takes a look at this, that my colleagues will realize that it's their constitutional duty to play a role here and be responsible, similar to what the Cantwell-Grassley Trade Review Act says. That is, that we are saying Congress [has] the dutiful constitutional authority on tariffs, and you have to have all trade policies come before Congress in a transparent and consistent fashion.

I hope that my colleagues will respond to this as the Supreme Court acts, and hopefully we will get more attention to the oversight demanded on high costs being impacted by tariffs.

We also must work harder to stop inflation and support policies that my colleagues on our side of the aisle have been talking about: how we want to have more affordable housing, how we want to lower the cost on household goods in general, how we want to address energy prices, and how we want Americans to feel like they can keep pace.

Yet, here we are on one of the biggest crisis that we could do something about right now, health care, and we're not doing anything about health care. The expired ACA, the Affordable Care Act, [enhanced premium] tax credit[s], the common-sense solution that we would have had, many Americans—millions of Americans—still having affordable insurance.

Our colleagues have not chosen to address this issue. The House passed an extension, a three year extension, and yet, here we are about to leave for a week, and our colleagues [in] the [Senate] will not even bring that extension up for a vote.

80,000 people in my state are now at risk of losing their health insurance. So, I asked our colleagues to do something about this. I see the President released a one-page health care framework today, and I'm glad he's getting in that, but Mr. President, today is the end of enrollment. We need more than a one-page plan. There are a lot of details that go into something that's 18% of US GDP. This is almost one in every \$5 spent in the American economy.

And after 15 years, we've heard nothing really from our Republican colleagues on how they're going to drive down the cost of health care. So, my constituents now looking at these increased inflation numbers also know that they can't afford to get sick. If they're going to lose this health care, they can't afford the impacts of the economy, and they can't afford the impacts of health care disappearing out from under them.

Mr. President, it is time we address inflation on a daily basis here. It is time we really think about what we can do to help the US economy, help Americans keep pace and help Americans restore the health care that they deserve to have.

I thank the president. I yield the floor.