

Kind, Wisconsin House Republicans praise new North American trade deal

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U.S. Rep. Ron Kind credited negotiations between House Dems and the Trump administration for yielding a “much better” North American trade deal than the one originally unveiled by President Trump over a year ago.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi Tuesday announced Dems struck a deal with the Trump administration on the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. The deal, which would fulfill one of Trump’s signature campaign promises, was originally agreed to in the fall of 2018. But its ratification had been held up as House Dems demanded stronger environmental, labor, enforcement and prescription drug pricing provisions.

But Kind, D-La Crosse, said negotiations over those demands ultimately led to a better deal, highlighting Dems work to add “strong enforceability language that was lacking in the original agreement.”

“I can’t emphasize enough why it was important to focus on enforceability, enforceability, enforceability,” he told WisPolitics.com. “You look at past trade agreements that lacked enforcement mechanisms. So when there was cheating going on, there was nothing you could really do about it and it cost us jobs.”

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Kind said while the deal contained “a little bit of improvement” for the state’s dairy industry in the form of eliminating Canada’s Class 7 milk pricing system, he noted that “agriculture gets no further market access with Canada and Mexico than what they currently already have under the old NAFTA.”

And he knocked Vice President Mike Pence, who in a visit to Marinette Marine last month promoted USMCA as “a win for Wisconsin workers and a win for American jobs.”

“So the vice president coming into the state saying this is crucial to our farmers is nonsense,” Kind said. “What’s crucial is that we do have a good trade relationship with our two border neighbors with continued market access that we enjoyed under the old NAFTA agreement.”

Pence did not explicitly mention farmers in his Nov. 20 address.

Trump in a series of tweets Tuesday morning said the revised deal was “looking good” and praised Dems’ backing as “great for our Country!”

“It will be the best and most important trade deal ever made by the USA,” he wrote.

Wisconsin House Republicans also lauded the deal.

“USMCA is a win for Wisconsin, for our dairy and manufacturing industries, and for middle-class families,” said U.S. Rep Bryan Steil, R-Janesville, in a statement. “From day one, I’ve supported this agreement and I am happy to see we are nearing the finish line. Wisconsin farmers and workers depend on strong trade agreements with our allies.”

The agreement also won praise from U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, who called it “a huge win for America and for Wisconsin.”

“It is a boon for our state’s dairy farmers who will have more access to Canadian markets,” the Menomonee Falls Republican said in a statement. “After enduring months of needless delay, I am eager to vote for the deal and am grateful to the Trump administration for their tireless work reaching an agreement.”

U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, meanwhile, reacted with a short statement.

“It’s about damn time,” the Green Bay Republican said.

A spokesman for U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan said the Town of Vermont Dem hadn’t seen a final text of the agreement and couldn’t comment.

Pocan has previously been critical of the deal’s lack of enforcement mechanisms

and a provision Dems said would have increased prescription drug costs by mandating a 10-year “test data” exclusivity period for pricey medications across all three countries, which he had previously equated to “a big, wet, sloppy kiss” for the pharmaceutical industry.

Reports from Washington indicate both concerns were addressed in the final text of the agreement.

Pelosi’s announcement clears the way for floor votes in the House and the GOP-controlled Senate, where the trade deal is expected to pass with wide margins.

Kind, meanwhile, said House Dems are aiming to get the deal passed before the end of next week.

See Trump’s tweets:

<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1204408551034228737>

<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1204409386535473158>

See Sensenbrenner’s statement:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2019/u-s-rep-sensenbrenner-usmca-is-a-huge-win-for-wisconsin/>

See Steil’s statement:

<https://steil.house.gov/media/press-releases/steil-statement-usmca-progress>

See Gallagher’s statement:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2019/u-s-rep-gallagher-statement-on-announcement-of-usmca-agreement/>