

2019 D.C. FLY-IN RECAP

June 12, 2019
Washington, D.C.



Freshman Congressman Colin Allred (D) from Dallas meets with TBLC members to discuss the importance of USMCA.



TBLC's Yancy & Joyce, Rich Gergasko of Texas Mutual, Rep. Allred, Gay Gaddis of T3, Jason Schenker of Prestige Economics, and Kent Eastman of CapitalOne Bank.



Chairman Gaddis chats with Freshman Rep. Lizzie Fletcher (D) of Houston about the biologics timeline issue.



Rep. Fletcher touts her leadership role in the New Democrats Caucus on trade when visiting with the TBLC.



TBLC Members with Congressman Michael Burgess (R) of North Texas, on Capitol Hill.



The group discussed the impact USMCA has on Texas and the issues Congress still needs to iron out before the vote.



Group shot with Congressman Marc Veasey (D), who represents the urban centers of Dallas and Fort Worth.



Rep. Veasey discussed USMCA, the labor provisions, and his concern on enforcement outlined in the deal.



TBLC Members on the tram from the House Office Buildings, headed for the U.S. Capitol.



Quick group shot following lunch at the historic Capitol Hill Club. We enjoyed the perfect weather!



Rep. Louie Gohmert (R) of East Texas met with the TBLC in the Rayburn Room inside the U.S. Capitol.



Together, we discussed USMCA, immigration, and commerce issues at the border between floor votes.

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SUMMARY: On June 12, 2019 a team of TBLC Members and staff conducted strategic meetings on Capitol Hill, in Washington, D.C. The mission for the TBLC was to continue to voice our collective concern for the Texas economy should USMCA not be ratified, educate leaders on the exponential growth and impact of trade with Mexico and Canada, and to learn more about the politics of the issue first hand.

Our team met with five Members of Congress and three Members' staffs, plus the Democratic staff for the Ways & Means Committee. According to feedback from the Members, our trip was both a successful mission to communicate the TBLC's position on USMCA and a valuable learning experience as to the domestic issues Democrats have raised – specifically in regard to labor standards enforcement, environmental protection enforcement, addressing climate change, and projected drug price increases as a result of pharmaceutical research time.

REPORT: Our day began with a breakfast briefing by **Andrew Beilein, Senior Director for Government Relations at Business Roundtable (BRT)** – the TBLC's national counterpart. Beilein gave our team a synopsis on where USMCA is in the process, what issues are becoming sticking points, and how leadership is working to address them. Overall Beilein and BRT are optimistic something will get done this year and that sentiment was echoed throughout all of our meetings.

After a quick taxi ride across Capitol Hill we met with freshman **Congressman Colin Allred (D) TX-32**. The Congressman listened to our concerns with regard to ratification and he informed us that while he's generally supportive of all trade, he had concerns with enforcing the labor reforms Mexico just recently passed as a precondition to entering the USMCA. He was optimistic an agreement could be forged and we left the meeting better aware of what hang ups Democratic Members have with the deal. In fact, we learned more about the four issues Democrats are raising as sticking points when we visited with **Congressman Will Hurd's (R) TX-23** staff next. In addition to labor standard enforcement, Democrats also want to ensure environmental protection enforcement, address climate change, and ease the research time the U.S. requires on pharmaceuticals. Currently at least 10 years of data collection is required before a drug can come to market and Democrats want that lowered. The U.S. currently mandates 12 years of data collection.

Next we sat down with **Congressman Filemon Vela's (D) TX-34** staff as well as Democratic staff from the **House Ways and Means Committee**. Here we got a better sense of USMCA's ratification timeline and the political will of House leadership to get this deal across the finish line this year – perhaps sometime between August and October, 2019. The Committee's chief concern is that they need time to receive the implementation memo (not the actual legislation – yet) from Ambassador Lightzinger so that they can better understand and negotiate with Members of Congress on what kind of legislation could pass the House when the formal trade deal finally comes to the floor. At that time the clock starts and 60 congressional working days are given to the House to ratify the trade deal. Then, 30 congressional working days are available to the Senate to concur with the House. Those 90 days total do not account for any parliamentarian rules adjustments that the Speaker can make to the House calendar while the legislation is pending. It seemed that the “90-day” countdown was rather arbitrary.

After a brief lunch at the Capitol Hill Club, the team visited with **Congressman Marc Veasey (D) TX-33** who raised similar concerns with labor but was confident the deal would pass. Freshman **Congresswoman Lizzie Fletcher (D) TX-7** – who displayed a pro-trade award from the Canadian Government – was also confident of passage but had concern for pharmaceuticals. Interestingly, Rep. Fletcher is co-chair for trade in the New Democrat Coalition which includes all freshman Democrats in the 116th Congress. After meeting with staff from the office of **Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D) TX-30**, we headed over to the U.S. Capitol to meet with **Congressman Louie Gohmert (R) TX-1** who met with us just off the House floor. Congressman Gohmert seemed cautiously optimistic that a deal could be struck on USMCA but was more interested in the TBLC's thoughts on the border. While he meant illegal immigration, we used the opportunity to voice our concern on the trade delays resulting from U.S. Customs officers and their reassignment to immigration enforcement.

The team rode the tram back from the Capitol to the Rayburn building for our last meeting with **Congressman Michael Burgess (R) TX-26**. Dr. Burgess also believes that the House will come together to pass USMCA and we shared with him all we learned from our eight meetings. The day wound down with a lovely dinner at Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak, and Snow Crab. **Special thanks are in order for those members who joined us in D.C. on their own time and expense: Chariman Gay Gaddis, Vice Chair Kent Eastman, Rich Gergasko, and Jason Schenker.**