



Gov. Kate Brown presents Charlie Utsunomiya with the “Governor’s Trade Leadership Award” at the Friends of Oregon reception in Tokyo.

Governor’s Trade Leadership award goes to long-time wheat associate

Oregon Department of Agriculture

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown and Oregon Department of Agriculture Director Alexis Taylor were in Japan in November to meet with key partners of Oregon and to make new connections as part of the Governor’s 2019 Trade Mission to Asia. Before leaving Japan, Brown honored Mr. Wataru “Charlie” Utsunomiya at the Friends of Oregon reception in Tokyo for his contributions to wheat trade between Oregon and Japan. At this gathering, it was especially fitting to honor this friend who has lived in both Oregon and Japan throughout his career and who has strengthened and maintained ties between Oregon and Japan around wheat.

“They say Charlie has crossed the Pacific Ocean about 100 times during his work with the U.S. Wheat Associ-

ates,” said Taylor. “It is an honor to recognize his dedication and success in helping to make Oregon wheat our state’s single largest agricultural export to Japan. We wish him well in retirement.”

Utsunomiya first came to Oregon more than 40 years ago as a customer of Oregon wheat. He worked in grain trading management for Marubeni as well as chairman of Columbia Grain Inc. and spent 13 years living in the Portland metro area. After his time with Marubeni, he joined U.S. Wheat Associates and spent 12 years representing them. Through his work, Utsunomiya brought many delegations of Japanese customers to visit Oregon wheat fields and hosted groups of classes and tours to the Wheat Marketing Center in Portland.

“Wataru Utsunomiya, whom we all know as Charlie, has been the key part of our efforts to build and maintain the relationships Oregon’s wheat growers have with our longest and best customers in Japan,” said Darren Padgett, an Oregon wheat farmer and vice chair of U.S. Wheat Associates. “All of our growers owe Charlie a huge thank-you for his years of service. He has made a difference for us.”

Japan has purchased significantly more U.S. wheat than any other country since 1949, when the Oregon Wheat Growers League first organized a trade delegation to investigate opportunities for expanding U.S. wheat sales. Wheat is Oregon’s sixth leading agricultural commodity by value at nearly \$300 million in 2018. Wheat is also Oregon’s leading agricultural export to Japan.

Corporate Activity Tax registration now open

Oregon Department of Revenue

SALEM — Registration for Oregon’s new Corporate Activity Tax is now open through the Department of Revenue’s Revenue Online system found at www.oregon.gov/dor.

The new law requires businesses with Oregon commercial activity in excess of \$750,000 to register for the Corporate Activity Tax. Once they reach that threshold, businesses must register within 30 days. Some businesses could reach the threshold early in January, while others might not top that mark until much later in the year.

Department officials said, however, that numerous participants in the agency’s 12-meeting statewide stakeholder input tour in September and October indicated a desire to register as soon as possible.

“Business taxpayers and tax preparers have told us they are eager to take the first step of compliance and register for the CAT,” said Nia Ray, director of the Oregon Department of Revenue. “We believe opening registration early will help with a smooth implementation.”

To register, individuals doing business in Oregon will need their name, and their social security number or individual taxpayer identification number. Businesses will need their legal name and federal employer identification number.

Businesses and individuals will need their

mailing address; the date they exceeded or expect to exceed \$750,000 in Oregon commercial activity; a valid email address or current Revenue Online login, and their Business Activity Code (refer to the current list of North American Industry Classification System codes found with federal income tax return instructions).

The Oregon Legislature created the Corporate Activity Tax in House Bills 3427 and 2164 during the 2019 session. The CAT is imposed on businesses for the privilege of doing business in Oregon. It applies to all business entities including those located inside and outside of Oregon. The CAT is not an income tax or a transactional tax, such as a retail sales tax. It is measured on a business’s commercial activity — the total amount a business realizes from transactions and activity in Oregon.

Businesses with taxable commercial activity in excess of \$1 million must pay the Corporate Activity Tax. The tax is \$250 plus 0.57% of gross receipts greater than \$1 million after subtractions.

More information about the Corporate Activity Tax is available at www.oregon.gov/DOR, including a list of frequently asked questions and a form to sign up for email updates on the CAT. Stakeholders can direct questions or comments about the CAT via email to cat.help.dor@oregon.gov or call 503-945-8005.

USMCA

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Richard Trumka. “President Trump may have opened this deal. But working people closed it.”

Business groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce also chimed in to support the long-delayed agreement.

“We are optimistic this development will open the door to final approval of USMCA on a bipartisan basis by the end of the year, which will especially benefit American farmers, manufacturers, and small businesses,” Thomas Donohue, CEO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said in a statement.

“This agreement has been

the result of painstaking bipartisan negotiations over the past year, and would not have been possible if not for the willingness of President Trump to work patiently with Democrats to get something done that he knew was in the best interests of American workers, farmers and manufacturers,” said Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, a former U.S. trade representative.

Republicans leaders and lawmakers have agitated for months for the accord but Pelosi has painstakingly worked to bring labor on board. Democrats see the pact as significantly better than NAFTA and Trumka’s endorsement is likely to add to a strong vote by Demo-

crats that have proven skeptical of trade agreements.

“I think the vote’s going to be pretty good,” said No. 2 House Democrat Steny Hoyer, D-Maryland, a veteran party whip. “There’s a general agreement — not total agreement, it’s not unanimity — that USMCA is better. It’s an improvement. And to the extent that Trumka and labor comes out and says that this is an improvement, I think that that will be unifying.”

The pact contains provisions designed to nudge manufacturing back to the United States. For example, it requires that 40% to 45% of cars eventually be made in countries that pay autoworkers at least \$16 an hour — that is, in the

United States and Canada and not in Mexico.

The trade pact picked up some momentum after Mexico in April passed a labor-law overhaul required by USMCA. The reforms are meant to make it easier for Mexican workers to form independent unions and bargain for better pay and working conditions, narrowing the gap with the United States.

Democrats succeeded in tossing overboard a 10-year protection for manufacturers of new drugs, including so-called biologics, that had won reprieve from lower-cost competition in the original accord. But Pelosi lost out in a bid to repeal so-called Section 230, a provision

in a 1996 law that gives social media companies like Facebook broad immunity from lawsuits over the content they publish on their platforms.

Conservative Pennsylvania GOP Sen. Pat Toomey offered a rare GOP voice against the accord, which he said veered to the left and “undermines the free flow of capital” from the U.S. to its trading partners.

“This is basically NAFTA with a few modernizations, and some restrictions on trade and an expiration date. If people think that’s a huge improvement than I guess they’ll be happy with it,” Toomey told reporters. “If people think free trade is im-

portant, they’ll presumably see it as the step backward that I see it as.”

Toomey said Democrats had outmaneuvered the administration, an assessment that Pelosi shared.

“We ate their lunch,” Pelosi told her Democratic colleagues in a closed-door meeting, according to an aide in the room.

But Vice President Mike Pence released a statement praising Trump’s leadership and claiming Democrats “have finally acquiesced” in allowing a vote on the trade pact.

Associated Press reporter Mark Stevenson contributed to this story from Mexico City.



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