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OUR VIEW

Cautious optimism on the trade front

Over the last three years we’ve learned to be cautious with our optimism on matters of trade. But, it looks as though there was some positive movement on that front last week.

After more than a year of dithering, the House of Representatives approved the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement. USMCA replaces the North American Free Trade Agreement.

NAFTA has received mixed reviews from farmers since the first President Bush negotiated it and President Clinton signed it.

Making good on a campaign pledge, President Trump reopened talks on the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico. The product of those negotiations was the USMCA. Those terms were formally accepted Nov. 1, 2018, and the deal was put before Congress.

And there it has sat. Although ag interests were happy with the new deal, Democrats in Congress said it didn’t go far enough to protect Mexican workers or the environment. Raising standards for Mexican workers makes U.S. manufacturing, particularly that staffed by union labor, more competitive.



A U.S. flag flies next to the Chinese national emblem in Beijing. The nations on Dec. 13 announced a de-escalation of the trade war.

House Democrats and the White House have been working behind the scenes to make the necessary tweaks to the pact. Despite the rancor over the House’s attempt to impeach Trump, or perhaps because of it, a deal was reached. Democrats representing districts in the industrial Midwest need a trade deal just as much as the president. The deal still has to be passed by the

Senate. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell anticipates that the Senate will have to consider articles of impeachment pending in the House, and says a vote on the trade deal will come after the Senate trial. Also last week, the administration and Chinese officials announced a deal to de-escalate the 17-month trade war between the two countries.

The U.S. agreed to suspend a new round of tariff hikes on \$160 billion worth of Chinese goods that were to go into effect last weekend and to reduce tariffs on \$112 billion in goods that are already in place. China agreed to buy \$40 billion worth of agricultural goods from the U.S. a year for the next two years.

The Chinese also agreed to reduce barriers to beef, poultry and animal feed, and to increase protections for intellectual property.

The president told farmers last week that they’d need to buy bigger tractors because they will be selling so much to China.

We suspect most farmers will hold their orders until the ships start leaving the dock. The announcement was light on the operational details. China’s commitment to \$40 billion in ag purchases is ambitious, given its purchases have never topped \$26 billion a year.

As we said, we’ve learned to be cautious because we’ve seen these deals fall through or stall just as quickly as they are announced.

But in keeping with the yuletide season, we are willing to believe possible a Christmas miracle or two — at least for now.

YOUR VIEWS

Wreath ceremony just one example of VFW community support

Mr. Park, a “kick in the pants” to you. The wreath ceremony is important and we had two people who volunteered to do the honor guard. Unfortunately one became ill and a replacement was not available. It is not necessary to have four people do an honor guard. Like so many, it is easier to criticize than help. VFW Post 922 was very busy that weekend. Saturday we helped with “Breakfast with Santa.” We made and donated the batter, cooked the pancakes, and served. We also assisted at the National Guard Christmas party. Throughout the year, VFW Post 922 members volunteer for many things that seem to escape mention. We helped put up the city Christmas decorations; many hours and dollars have been spent creating the new (unnamed) military recognition park; we help with the river park cleanup and Cabbage Hill view point. We spend hours putting up and taking down flags on Main Street and at Olney Cemetery. We organize and run the Fourth of July parade and Veterans and Memorial Day ceremonies. We financed and built the picnic shelter at Stillman Park. The Post donates money to many community organizations such as Altrusa, Boy Scouts, FFA, D.A.R.E., and youth sports (not just Pendleton). We provide scholarships, have given money for graduation parties (also not just Pendleton), and support the college veterans program. Post 922 also sponsors the police and firefighters awards ceremonies and the Teacher of the Year recognition. When there is a fire, our members provide relief such as snacks, water and coffee to the firefighters. This is only a partial list of all we do.

I encourage you, or anyone that is a war veteran, to join VFW or our auxiliary. Then you could help instead of criticizing. We have already served our country and now serve our community. We do the best we can with the limited number of members that are physically able to help.

Gary Ward, commander
VFW Post 922
Pendleton

If Trump is innocent, let him prove it

Trump is trying to take control of our government. We are a democ-

racy, not a monarchy. We, the people, deserve an honest look at the Trump administration. Trump’s staff must testify, Trump may if he chooses, but we cannot allow our three branches of government to merge into one or two branches. We cannot have our representatives declaring the outcome of a trial before hearing from all witnesses involved. The reason Congress proceeded with impeachment is because Trump is acting like a monarch by refusing to allow his administration to provide staff, documents and recordings for Congress. We know that Russia was allowed to meddle in our 2016 election. We know Trump attempted to bribe Ukraine to meddle on his behalf toward the 2020 election. We heard Trump invite China to meddle. Now the Trump administration and GOP senators are cooperating as one branch for a hearing. Innocent people do not behave as Trump, his administration and the GOP are. If the Trump administration is innocent, they need to provide us with the requested people and documents to prove it. Any representative that has stated the trial outcome prior to the trial must recuse from the process. Trump needs to be impeached.

Janice Dougherty
Pendleton

Abuse of power is not OK

It is not OK for a president to abuse the power of his office for personal gain. It is not OK for a president to lie. It is not OK for a president to encourage others to commit crimes with the promise that he will later pardon them. It is not OK for a president to bribe a foreign government. It is not OK for a president to ask a foreign government to interfere in our elections. It is not OK for a president to obstruct a Congressional investigation. It is not OK for a president’s actions to threaten our national security. It is not OK for an elected representative, such as Rep. Greg Walden and his Republican colleagues, to pretend that any of the above are OK. It is not OK for an elected representative, such as Rep. Greg Walden and his Republican colleagues, to ignore his/her sworn duty to uphold the Constitution and the rule of law in this country. It is so not OK.

Daniel Fritz
Mosier

OTHER VIEWS

An open letter to Rep. Greg Walden

I appreciated your prompt response to my previous email, but was extremely disappointed by the lack of logic in its contents. It has taken me all the past 11 days to find a way to express my disappointment to you. I would not make the effort if I did not believe you to be at heart a person of reason and conscience, one who felt uncomfortable signing (and maybe even composing) the salad of inaccuracies, half-truths and ad hominem attacks that I received. The educator in me wants to start by reviewing your letter. The first paragraph alludes to the “most vocal impeachment supporters” who have always considered President Trump unfit for office. This is a completely irrelevant non sequitur. Yes, there are a small handful of congresspeople who fit this description — and the House leaderships, both before and after the midterm elections, have always ignored them. They are are not the reason you will be voting on Wednesday; evidence and sworn testimony are. Attempting such a distraction technique did not start your letter off on a respect-worthy note.

Your second paragraph complained about the impeachment inquiry proceedings, in that they were conducted more privately than those of Presidents Nixon or Clinton. Did you think that your constituents would not know that the difference this time is caused by the nature of the case? The previous crimes and misdemeanors were entirely domestic affairs. This is an international scandal, with security ramifications. It was right and proper that the initial phases be private. Similarly, the Republican involvement in those private sessions was indeed restricted to the Republicans sitting on the respective committees — as was the Democratic involvement restricted to the members of those committees. That does not equate to anyone being “largely shut out,” as your letter erroneously states. And, yes, certain members “were denied opportunities to ask questions” but only when those members had consistently demonstrated that they were going to use their questions to improperly try to out the identity of the whistleblower, instead of trying to ascertain the relevant facts of the case. Can we agree that these few colleagues who got lost in an obsession, the only purpose of which could be an opening for ad hominem attacks, should not be considered representatives of the GOP as a whole? They deserve neither your adherence nor your defense. Your third paragraph rightly implies that impeachment is a serious step, but sadly it includes the mischaracterization of impeachment as “overturning the will of the American people.” That is not at all accurate. The Amer-

ican people elected President Trump to preside honestly and honorably over the executive branch of our government. He has been doing that, more or less, for two years. However, now both his own words and the evidence before Congress indicate that he seriously slipped. It is now the American people’s will that he be held accountable for his mistake. We elected him to be a public servant, not an infallible Pope. We elected you all to uphold the law. Finally, you concluded that you felt that President’s Trump’s actions do not “rise to the level of impeachment and removal.” Here you disingenuously overstep your bounds. First (and again), it is not your place, as a member of the House, to decide the President’s level of culpability. That is the Senate’s job. Your job is simply to look at what happened and decide whether it is the type of thing that we wish to see presidents continue to do. (Hint: It’s not.) Second, you imply that removal from office is a necessary consequence of impeachment — when no impeached president has ever been removed from office! The main point is to send the message that, like extramarital affairs, torquing of foreign relations for personal political gain is not acceptable. As for that last point, the evidence before Congress supports everything that was indicated in the President’s own transcript. President Trump asked two favors of President Zelensky: that Ukraine would look into a debunked conspiracy theory about Crowd-strike (though even in the same breath he made the investigation pointless, because the Mueller Investigation had no consequences); and that Ukraine would look into not governmental corruption as a whole, not possible misuse of defense spending, but only into possible impropriety of one member of a board of directors of one private energy company. Neither of those two favors have any significance to European security or U.S. defense spending. However, the first has a significance to President Trump’s reputation, and the second has significance for the reputation of a Democratic challenger. Even if the President had not used the designated aid to leverage these “favors” (and evidence says he did), simply asking was an improper use of executive power. One we do not want to see again. I have heard in the news that you are hearing party whips tell you this is a test of your loyalty to the party and to this president. Please allow me and my fellow constituents be whips reminding you of your even higher loyalties to our republic, our Constitution and to the truth.

Valerie Wenzel is a teacher, who lives in Athena.



VALERIE
WENZEL
COMMENT