



WASHINGTON COUNCIL ON
INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Annual Summit identifies key challenges, opportunities for Washington state
Virtual conference features perspectives from elected officials and trade experts

SEATTLE, WA – May 18, 2022 – The Washington Council on International Trade’s (WCIT) Annual Summit, the largest gathering of elected officials and experts focused on Washington state trade, took place May 12 with attendees and participants gathering virtually. The event brought together the state’s top business, government, and community leaders as well as US and foreign government officials and experts who shared insights on the pressing issues shaping the international landscape.

“Given the importance of trade to the region’s economy, the WCIT summit was a great opportunity to pinpoint causes, discuss solutions and identify opportunities to help Washington businesses, farmers, workers and communities reap the benefits of expanded trade,” said WCIT President Lori Otto Punke.

Several members of the Washington state Congressional delegation, including U.S. Reps Susan DelBene, Jaime Herrera Beutler, Derek Kilmer and Rick Larsen participated in focused interviews and panel discussions providing a broader perspective on trade from the nation’s capital. Lt. Governor Denny Heck shared his thoughts on the state government’s role in promoting trade (including leading trade missions to foreign capitals), and Seattle-native Jayme White, who is now Deputy United States Trade Representative, shared the key priorities of the Biden Administration trade agenda.

Members of Congress addressed efforts to make the U.S. more competitive, – most importantly the Conference now underway with the House and Senate on the US Innovation and Competition Act and the America Competes Act. The Congressional representatives also discussed the impact of the war in Ukraine on trade, agriculture, infrastructure investments and digital trade. China and the new Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) were raised as key areas of interest.

- *(On trade policy) “Good trade policy is about reducing barriers and making it easier to our products to compete abroad.” Rep. Derek Kilmer (D-WA)*
- *(On digital trade) “Every industry is impacted by digital trade...we need to work together with our allies to put out strong rules for a digital economy.” Rep. Suzan DelBene (D-WA)*
- *(On US-China competition) “We need to focus on what the U.S. is not doing and change what we are doing to get more on the offensive in this area.” Rep. Rick Larsen (D-WA)*
- *(On importance of trade) “Southwest Washington is the most trade dependent region in the state with sixteen water ports. Trade is the name of the game for a lot of our businesses.” Rep. Jamie Herrera Beutler (R-WA)*
- *(On infrastructure and Washington state) “Our state is blessed with deep water ports and being proximate to major overseas markets...we need to invest in the vital arteries that get our products to our ports.” Lt. Governor Denny Heck*

- *(On the nexus between climate and trade) “It’s becoming very clear. When you talk trade, you talk climate.” Deputy USTR Jayme White*

The Summit also included panels featuring journalists, academicians, foreign government officials and business leaders sharing thoughts and experiences on the key issue areas and priorities for Washington state trade.

- Consul Generals from Canada, Israel and the United Kingdom shared their thoughts on fostering partnerships with Washington state businesses, the key emerging sectors for growth, and their own perspectives on global trade. Canada and Israel already enjoy free trade agreements with the US while the UK is looking to build a closer relationship.
- A panel of experts conducted a deep dive on opportunities in the Asia region, the Biden Administration’s proposed Indo Pacific Economic Framework, perspectives on U.S.-China trade tensions, and the details of the legislation now in conference which includes funding of semiconductor chips, R&D, and STEM education. Concerns were also raised over provisions such as reverse investment screening requirements on US outbound investment, changes to the *de minimis* provisions and U.S. trade remedy rules. In the short term, it does not appear that there will be new initiatives to expand U.S.-China trade or lower tariff retaliation.
- Pandemic-driven supply chain challenges were a focus of an afternoon panel of business and agriculture leaders who identified the ongoing challenges to container traffic and potential areas of improvement. US agriculture in particular is struggling with getting their food exports into containers and are frustrated with containers leaving U.S. ports empty.
- Business leaders participated in a session on successful private sector approaches to sustainability and climate friendly trade, focus areas of research and development and ways they are partnering with governments and other groups to address climate change.

“In bringing together the foremost experts and elected leaders with the Washington trade community, we were able to get a thoughtful perspective on the issues that will drive the future of trade in the region,” said Lori Otto Punke. “It was a lively discussion, we had great insights from our distinguished participants, and the learnings from the sessions will help inform and hone our trade advocacy efforts.”

ABOUT WASHINGTON COUNCIL ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE On behalf of our members – manufacturers, farmers, retailers, service providers and non-profits – the Washington Council on International Trade advocates for pro-trade policies and investments that benefit Washington’s workers and employers. Trade paves the way for Washington-made goods and services to reach foreign markets, provides Washingtonians with products that raise our quality of life, and sustains family-wage jobs in numerous local industries. To learn more, visit us at <http://www.wcit.org>