

SUMMARY: On March 19, through March 21, 2018 the Federal Issues Task Force of the Texas Business Leadership Council (TBLC) – led by TBLC Chairman Gay Gaddis – hosted members in Washington, D.C. for a series of meetings and discussions on the future of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The mission for the TBLC delegation was to voice our collective concern for the Texas economy should NAFTA be weakened, educate leaders on the exponential growth and impact of NAFTA, and to learn more about the politics of the issue first hand.

Our delegation of 10 TBLC members, two staffers, and two guests met with eight Members of Congress including both U.S. Senators, two House Chairmen, and the Mexican Ambassador to the United States. According to survey feedback TBLC Members thought our “D.C. Fly-In” was both a successful mission to communicate the TBLC’s position on NAFTA and a valuable learning experience as to the global and domestic politics swirling around the renegotiation effort.

REPORT: On the evening on March 19th Members of the TBLC had the opportunity to dine with the Mexican Ambassador to the United States, **His Excellency Gerónimo Gutiérrez**, and discuss the deep relationship Mexico has with Texas and the United States. Retired U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, **the Hon. Tony Garza** helped to moderate the discussion as they discussed international business, employee sentiment, and the impact of the Mexican presidential election. **Congressman Will Hurd** (TX-23) was also in attendance and discussed domestic politics and the fact that too many Texans do not realize the positive effects that NAFTA has on jobs and the economy.

On March 20th we joined **Bill Miller**, Vice President of Business Roundtable (BRT) for briefings from their experts on workforce, education, and trade. **Dane Linn**, Vice President in charge of Workforce Education and Immigration opened the briefing, discussing priorities BRT has been working on with the Administration in regard to workforce development, as well as providing an update on DACA. **David Thomas**, Vice President in charge of Trade discussed updates from their meetings with the administration on NAFTA and then invited the group to join BRT for a keynote address by **Senator Orin Hatch** (R-UT) on the importance of NAFTA and free trade, followed by a panel discussion with former U.S. Senator and Ambassador to China, **the Hon. Max Baucus** and **Tom Linebarger**, Chairman and CEO of Cummins. Senator Hatch’s keynote discussed the dangers of protectionism while the panel warned about China’s growing global influence and the reasons why firms decide to develop assets and create jobs where they do. The panel was shown live on CNBC.

Next the team met with **Senator Ted Cruz** (R-TX) where he briefed the group on his discussions with the President in regard to preserving NAFTA. Sen. Cruz, with other Senators, had recently met with President Trump who remains skeptical that NAFTA is good for the country but, has been more open to addressing concerns rather than simply pulling out of the agreement. Next the team then headed to lunch at the Capitol Hill Club with **Congressman Bill Flores** (TX-17) where he gave the group an update on the issues he’s working on and discussed the domestic politics at play with the Administration at home and its affect on NAFTA.

The remainder of the day consisted of back-to-back meetings with members of the Texas Delegation including **Congressman Pete Sessions** (TX-32), Chairman of House Rules; **Congressman Joaquin Castro** (TX-20), Deputy Minority Whip; **Congressman Kevin Brady** (TX-8), Chairman of Ways and Means; **Congressman Roger Williams** (TX-25); and **Senator John Cornyn** (R-TX), Majority Whip who, like the others we met with, expressed his gratitude for our delegation coming to Washington to promote the importance of a strong NAFTA 2.0. The evening ended with a team dinner on Capitol Hill.

Due to snow, the government was closed on March 21st and meetings with the Commerce Department were canceled. A call will be scheduled in Q2 for all members to follow up.



Arriving for dinner at the Mexican Ambassador's residence.



TBLC members enjoying dinner with the Mexican Ambassador to the United States, His Excellency Gerónimo Gutiérrez.



Congressman Will Hurd with Brenda Mainwaring.



Former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Tony Garza with Kent Eastman.



Congressman Pete Sessions (Chairman of House Rules) with Gigi Myung.



TBLC members with Senator Ted Cruz.



Senator Ted Cruz and TBLC Chairman Gay Gaddis engaged in a discussion on NAFTA.



TBLC members sitting down for a meeting with Congressman Roger Williams.



TBLC members with Senator John Cornyn.



Senator John Cornyn (Majority Whip) with Kent Eastman and Renard Johnson during their meeting.



TBLC members gathered in the Capitol Rotunda between meetings with federal officials.



TBLC members with Congressman Kevin Brady.



Senator Orin Hatch spoke on the importance of NAFTA and free trade at the Business Roundtable event.



Former U.S. Senator and Ambassador to China, Max Baucus and Tom Linebarger of Cummins on BRT's panel.



TBLC members with Congressman Joaquin Castro.