

Oklahoma's congressional delegation tried to draw attention away from impeachment proceedings last week with a unified call to pass the United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement, known as the USMCA.

A rare joint statement including all five House members and both U.S. senators asked the House to put aside those proceedings to advance the replacement for the North American Free Trade Agreement. Even Democrat Kendra Horn, whose reelection chances are seen as diminished by impeachment, joined her Republican colleagues. "Finding common ground takes hard work, and we won't cross the finish line with finger-pointing or partisan politics," Horn said. "As the year comes to a close, we must find a bipartisan agreement and bring the USMCA to the floor for a vote." The USMCA is hung up in the House, ostensibly because of some Democrats' concerns about its impact on workers. Republicans contend that the issue is really a Democratic political ploy. "Oklahoma farmers, ranchers and manufacturers need trade certainty," said U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe. "We can support them through new, fair trade policies if Democrats would stop playing partisan politics." First District Congressman Kevin Hern said the agreement will stimulate new jobs and economic activity. "This kind of growth in our economy is beyond political spats and has overwhelming, bipartisan support in Congress," he said. "We cannot stall this deal any longer."

Oh SNAP: Hern endorsed new U.S. Department of Agriculture rules that will make it more difficult for adults ages 18-49 to qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. The change is described as an effort to force more able-bodied individuals into the work force. "There is nothing quite as empowering as a job," Hern said in a press release. "No federal program has the power to pull a person out of poverty, no government handout can help a person find independence and success. Only through gainful employment can a person find true stability. We should be encouraging our people to work, contribute to the economy, and put themselves on the path to independence rather than chaining them to the crutch of social programs. Programs like SNAP were never meant to be a long-term solution, but merely a temporary assistance." Officials say

the change won't affect parents with children, children themselves, disabled adults or pregnant women.

Remember this?: U.S. Sen. James Lankford reminded his colleagues of the nation's mounting debt, an issue that seems to have been all but forgotten in recent years. Lankford said increasing deficits are the result of overspending and bad management, not the 2017 tax cuts. Lankford said total federal revenue has increased since the cuts. "Now we are so far out of balance \$1 trillion that literally you could shut down the entire Department of Defense, the Department of Education, the State Department, you could close down every single one of those, and we still wouldn't balance in a year," he said during a floor speech.

Base housing: Inhofe continued his assault on Balfour Beatty, the defense contractor whose housing at Tinker Air Force Base and elsewhere has come under fire for shoddy construction and poor management. "Why is it that they're still there?" Inhofe demanded of senior military officials during a two-hour hearing. Separately, Horn told Balfour Beatty's chief executive officer that the company should return bonuses it received as the result of allegedly falsified records concerning their operations.

Dots and dashes: Lankford signed onto a bill aimed at combating new types of synthetic opioids. ... The Senate passed a Lankford bill intended to protect federal retirees from embezzlement.

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