

NEWS from

**Sen. Patrick Leahy | Sen. Lisa Murkowski | Rep.
Annie Kuster | Rep. Elise Stefanik**

Sen. Schumer | Sen. Johnson | Sen. Heitkamp | Sen. Shaheen | Sen. Cantwell | Sen.
Murray | Sen. Gillibrand

**Bipartisan Senate-House Coalition
Introduces Bill To Facilitate U.S. Preclearance
Operations In Canada, To Expedite
U.S.-Canada Travel And Commerce**

WASHINGTON (TUESDAY, March 1) – Bipartisan legislation to increase national security and facilitate travel and commerce between the United States and Canada was introduced Tuesday in the House and Senate. The Promoting Travel, Commerce, and National Security Act paves the way for expansion of preclearance facilities, operated by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, at land, rail, marine and air ports of departure in Canada.

Expanding preclearance operations will be on the table for further discussion when Prime Minister Trudeau arrives next week for the first state visit to Washington by a Canadian leader in two decades. The two governments reached an agreement about preclearance on March 16, 2015 and the bill introduced Tuesday is a necessary step toward solidifying the agreement.

The bill was introduced in the Senate by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska). The other original cosponsors of the Senate bill are Senators Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.), Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), Patty Murray (D-Wash.), and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.). Bipartisan companion legislation was introduced Tuesday in the House of Representatives, led by Representatives Annie Kuster (D-N.H.) and Elise Stefanik (R-N.Y.).

The United States currently operates preclearance facilities at 15 airports in six countries, including Canada. These facilities allow travelers to pass through CBP inspections prior to traveling, expediting their arrival in the United States, and protecting national security by identifying individuals who represent a threat to U.S. national security before they depart foreign soil. Under the new agreement, the United States will expand its preclearance operations in Canada, which will include rail preclearance facilities for the first time. The Leahy-authored legislation is a necessary prerequisite to full implementation of this agreement, and therefore to the benefits of expanded preclearance operations in Canada. It ensures that any incidents involving U.S. personnel on the job in Canada are handled under U.S. law, not Canadian law.

Leahy, a longtime advocate for improving cross-border travel, said: “In Vermont, we look to our Canadian neighbors as partners in trade and commerce, and as joint stewards of our shared communities. And many Vermont families have members on both sides of the border. This agreement has long been a dream for Vermonters who have fond memories of taking the train north to Montreal to enjoy all that vibrant cultural hub offers. It is also a win for visitors from Canada’s largest cities who love to come to Vermont to ski, shop and dine. This agreement will greatly benefit the Vermont and the U.S. economies.”

Sen. Murkowski said: “Preclearance is valuable for Alaska’s cruise industry, enabling our visitors to spend more time enjoying Southeast Alaska – time that would otherwise be spent in border processing. Full implementation of the US-Canada preclearance agreement offers the promise of expanding trade and commerce throughout the Pacific Northwest Economic Region to the mutual benefit of all of the communities in the region.”

Rep. Kuster said: “Since taking office, I have made job creation and support for local business a number one priority. I’m proud to join with Senator Leahy to introduce this bill, which will increase economic and trade opportunities for New Hampshire companies all across the state. What’s more, this bill will benefit our tourism sector, which is New Hampshire’s second largest industry. By streamlining travel processes between the U.S. and Canada, my bill will strengthen our national security by helping law enforcement stop individuals who pose a potential threat before they step foot on our soil. This is a win-win all around, and I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to come together to pass this important piece of legislation.”

Congresswoman Stefanik said: “This significant, bipartisan legislation is great news for U.S.-Canadian relations and will go a long way to benefit our Upstate New York economy. Increasing commerce with our Canadian neighbors is a top economic priority for our region, and this legislation will help build increased economic ties while supporting travel, commerce and tourism between our two nations as well. Furthermore, this legislation will help build integrated defense capabilities to maintain a secure Northern border. Importantly for the North Country, this legislation will facilitate Amtrak service from Montreal through our district, and will reinforce the future of small border crossings by allowing the option of joint operations on one side or the other. This is a landmark piece of legislation for U.S. and Canadian relations and I look forward to helping move it through Congress.”

Sen. Murkowski said:

Senator Schumer said: “Implementing pre-clearance for cars and trucks to move more efficiently between New York and Canada will be critical to both increasing efficiency and economic opportunities for Western New York, the North Country and the Capital Region – and clearing these legal hurdles now will better pave the way to making this prescreening program a reality. This legislation will bring us one step closer to reducing horrible wait times and boosting shopping and tourism opportunities for local businesses for years to come. I am urging my colleagues in Congress to pass this bill, which will allow Western New York, the North Country and the Capital Region to continue their role as an economic artery for New York State, pumping in vital investment and growth for a generation.”

Sen. Johnson said: “In February, I was pleased to see the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act signed into law. It included an important provision I worked on to authorize the Department of Homeland Security’s preclearance operations. Today, I am happy to join Sen. Leahy’s efforts in further expanding preclearance operations with our northern neighbor. Preclearance extends the United States’ virtual border to the last point of departure. This legislation expands the method from eight Canadian airports to other modes of transportation and provides needed authorities to CBP officers. The way to make our northern border more secure without

impeding travel is through agreements like this. I'm glad that administration officials agree. This is an important step Congress can take to enhance our national security."

Sen. Heitkamp said: "Representing a state with strong ties to Canada – not to mention our shared border – I know how critical it is to make sure people and goods can move efficiently, safely and securely across the border. This bipartisan bill we're introducing today is an important step forward, and one of the final pieces needed as we work to implement an agreement struck by the U.S. and the Canada to expedite preclearance."

Sen. Shaheen said: "Granite Staters have long looked to Canada not only as a friendly neighbor to the north but also a critical economic partner. Easing restrictions on commerce and tourism to and from Canada is important to encouraging economic growth in New Hampshire, especially in the North Country. Many families and communities span the US-Canadian border, and we want to ensure that those who cross the border regularly are not unduly hindered."

Sen. Murray said: "As a senator from a border state, I believe we should be constantly looking at ways to make our security systems smarter and more effective, and this bill moves us toward that goal. I'm proud to support legislation that improves mobility between Washington state and Canada while enhancing security—benefitting citizens, travelers, and our regional economy."

Sen. Gillibrand said: "As one of the busiest passenger crossings in the country, safety and efficiency are critical in connecting the U.S. with Canada. Making the pre-inspection at the Peace Bridge permanent would enhance the security of the transfer of goods and services across the border. The safeguards provided by the legislation would help move along this critical process that will boost New York's economy and preserve our economic links with Canada."

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