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....Senator Paul Wellstone, Minnesota

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## Senate vote confirms new era in U.S.-China relations

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate voted Tuesday to permanently normalize trade with China, opening the world's most populous nation to American products, services and ideas about capitalism and democracy.

The 83-15 vote, sending the bill to the president for his signature, represents the biggest step in U.S.-China relations since President Nixon's 1972 visit to the Great Wall and ends the divisive annual debates over U.S. trade policy toward the Communist country.

In the end, those arguing the United States must do more to bring China into the international community prevailed over critics warning Congress was putting profits ahead of principle.

Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, D-N.Y., said it was an "epic decision" that could help advance the rule of law and respect for human rights in China.

The House passed PNTR, or the permanent normal trade relations

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bill, last May, and President Clinton, backed by a powerful coalition of business and farm groups, has hailed it as one of the most important events in U.S.-China relations since Nixon reopened contacts almost three decades ago.

"This historic legislation will be remembered as the key that opened the door for America to sell its products and services to the world's largest emerging marketplace," said Robert Burt, chairman of The Business Roundtable, an association of CEOs.

The bill revises a 1974 law under which trade relations with commu-

nist states are subject to annual review. Since the 1989 crackdown on the Tiananmen democracy movement, congressional critics of China have made concerted, if unsuccessful, efforts every year to rescind normal trade status because of Beijing's human rights and weapons proliferation abuses.

The bill to make trade relations permanent is an outgrowth of a U.S.-China agreement last fall under which China, as a condition for entering the World Trade Organization, made major concessions in reducing tariffs and opening its markets. China is expected

to join the WTO later this year or early next year, and the United States, in order to enjoy the benefits of China's commitment to WTO free market rules, must grant permanent trade status.

Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., stressed it will still be up to Americans to take advantage of new market opportunities. "Passage of PNTR will be one for the history books, of profound implication to the United States, but once it passes then we Americans have to put our shoulders to the wheel, we have to follow up."

With WTO entry, China's tar-

iffs on U.S. made manufactured goods would fall from an overall average of 25 percent to 9 percent by 2005. Duties on America's primary food products would drop from 31 percent to 14 percent.

China would be required to open its financial and service industries to American companies, allow greater outside ownership in its telecommunications industry and allow Americans full distribution rights within the country.

Agriculture exports alone could grow by some \$2 billion a year, helping reduce China's current \$68 billion trade surplus with the United States.

"We wanted to be the first ones here. This has big potential for agriculture states like North Dakota," said North Dakota Gov. Ed Schafer, chairman of the Republican Governors Association, in a call from Beijing where he is heading a state trade delegation. Under the pact, he said, China must increase its quota of tariff-free wheat imports fivefold

to 350 million bushels a year.

"One out of eight jobs in Illinois depends upon exports and passage of this critical measure means that Congress' vote will impact the lives of 500,000 Illinoisans and their families," said Illinois Gov. George Ryan, a Republican.

But others questioned the wisdom of giving up trade as a policy tool for forcing China toward more responsible behavior.

"I believe that we will deeply regret this stampede to pass this legislation and the way in which we have taken all the human rights, religious freedom, right to organize, all of those concerns and we just put them in parentheses, put them in brackets, as if they don't exist," said Sen. Paul Wellstone, D-Minn.

The legislation calls for setting up a congressional-executive commission to monitor human rights in China and creates a so-called surge mechanism to help American industries and workers hurt by an increase in Chinese imports.