

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks on Signing a Memorandum Imposing United States Tariffs on Certain Chinese Imports and an Exchange With Reporters

May 14, 2024

The President. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Now, I assume you're standing in case you have to run when the rain starts. [*Laughter*] Please, have a seat.

Rox, thank you very much for all you do to fight for American steelworkers. I mean that sincerely.

I—and I want to recognize all the labor unions here today, including Steelworkers, Auto Workers, Sheet Metal Workers, AFL–CIO, IBEW, Communications Workers, Boilermakers, Machinists.

I'm proud, as Rox said, to be labeled the most pro-union President in American history. You heard me say it before: Wall Street is important, lot of good folks there, but they didn't build America. The middle class built America, and unions built the middle class.

Folks, leaders from key American industries are here as well, including steel, aluminum, solar, semiconductors, automakers.

And members of my Cabinet are here as well: Janet Yellen—the front row is "murderers' row" here—[*laughter*]—the Treasury Department; Julie Su, our Trade—our—of Labor; and Katherine Tai, our Nation's Trade Representative.

And outstanding Members of Congress as well. From Michigan, Debbie Stabenow is here. Debbie, welcome. And Haley Stevens is here. No, I guess she—there you are. Oh, you did make it. They told me you might not be able to make it. I'm sorry.

Representative Haley M. Stevens. I'm here. [*Inaudible*]

The President. All right.

And Congresswoman Debbie Dingell. Again, you—smile, Debbie, it's okay. [*Laughter*]

Representative Deborah A. Dingell. I am. I'm happy.

The President. Elissa Slotkin—well, you should be. [*Laughter*] You—you're responsible for a lot of this.

Thank you for joining us as I announce a series of actions to make sure American workers and American business and corporations can compete and win in the industries of the future, because that's what this is about.

The fact is that American workers are—can outwork and outcompete anyone, as long as the competition is fair. But for too long, it hasn't been fair.

For years, the Chinese Government has poured state money into Chinese companies across a whole range of industries: steel and aluminum, semiconductors, electric vehicles, solar panels—the industries of the future—and even critical health equipment, like gloves and masks.

China heavily subsidized all these products, pushing Chinese companies to produce far more than the rest of the world can absorb. And then dumping the excess products onto the market at unfairly low prices, driving other manufacturers around the world out of business.

You know, we—I won't go into it, but we were talking today about how many aluminum plants there used to be and how many there are now.

The price is unfairly low because Chinese companies don't need to worry about a profit because the Chinese Government subsidized them and subsidized them heavily.

And the Chinese relies on other anticompetitive tactics as well, like forcing the American companies to transfer their technology in order to do business in China.

I've spent a lot of time with Xi Jinping. Early on, I told him—he said, why am I being unfair with China? [*Inaudible*—unfair. I said: "Look, we'll play by the same rules if you want. If you want to do business in China, you've got to have a 51-percent Chinese owner, you've got to provide access to all your intellectual property, et cetera. You want to do that in America?" There was silence.

Sometimes they just outright steal through cyber espionage and other means. And it's been a—well documented and internationally recognized.

When you make tactics like these, they are—they're—you're not competing. It's not competition, it's cheating. And we've seen the damage here in America.

To name one example, back in 2000, when cheap steel from China began to flood the market, U.S. steel towns across Pennsylvania and Ohio were hit hard. And any of you from those areas know well. More than 1,800 [18,000; White House correction] ironworkers and steelworkers in Pennsylvania and Ohio lost their jobs.

I'm not going to let that happen again. That's why today I'm announcing new tariffs in key sectors of the economy that are going to ensure that our workers are not held back by unfair trade practices.

They include a thing I'm announcing today: 25-percent tariff on Chinese steel and aluminum products. And we'll counter China's overcapacity in these industries.

And we're making major investments in clean American steel and aluminum—clean American steel and aluminum. It's a big deal. Clean because of the way we manufacture it here—it emits half as much carbon as steel made in China.

Last month, my administration announced the largest investment in clean manufacturing in all of history, up to \$1.5 billion in six clean steel projects across America, creating and supporting thousands—thousands—of union jobs.

Next, a 100-percent tariff on electric vehicles made in China. And people say, "Wow." [*Applause*] Because we're not going to let China flood our market, making it impossible for American automakers—automobile—auto manufacturers to compete fairly.

We're also implementing a 25-percent tariff on electric vehicle batteries from China and a 25-percent tariff on the critical minerals that make those batteries.

Folks, look, I'm determined that the future of electric vehicles will be made in America by union workers. Period. And we'll do it by following international trade laws to do it.

American companies are investing tens of billions of dollars in electric vehicles and batteries. And thanks to my bipartisan infrastructure law, we're building a network of 500,000 charging stations all across America, creating thousands—thousands—of IBEW jobs across America. Electric charging stations—[*applause*]—and the reason to do this is simple: Electric charging stations have to be as easy to find as a gas station, and that's what this will be. You're not going to have to worry about—you're taking off, and you're going to be able to make it all across the country in one—without having to figure something else out.

Our partners around the world are making similar investments. They also want a supply chain for electric vehicles that isn't dominated by unfair trade practices from China.

America can continue to buy—Americans—I want to make this clear, notwithstanding what the other guy is saying—can buy any kind of car they want, whether it's gas, electric, or hybrid, but we're never going to allow China to unfairly control the market for these cars. Period.

Next, we're going to raise tariffs on Chinese solar panels from 25 to 50 percent. Here, again, because the Chinese Government is subsidizing excess capacity, they're flooding the market. They're driving manufacturing companies out of business in Europe. But we won't let that happen here in America.

We're putting a 50-percent tariff on semiconductors made in China. These are those tiny computer—all of you know this, but for the public—those little, tiny computer chips, smaller than a fingertip, that power our everyday lives, everything from smartphones to automobiles to dishwashers, satellites.

Look, America invented these cheeps [chips; White House correction]. But, over time, we stopped making them. We invested other—overseas. Now, thanks to my CHIPS and Science Act, one of the most significant investments ever in science and technology, we're bringing this vital industry back home where it started, in the United States of America.

And finally, we're putting tariffs on health equipment, like masks and gloves that nurses and doctors wear every single day. If the pandemic caught us any—taught us anything, we need to have a secure supply of essential supplies here at home.

Folks, these key sectors, my administration is combining investments in America with tariffs that are strategic and targeted. It's a smart approach.

Compare that to the prior—what the prior administration did. The—my predecessor promised to increase American exports and boost manufacturing. But he did neither. He failed. He signed a trade deal with China. They were supposed to buy \$200 billion more in American goods. Instead, China imports from America barely budged.

And now Trump and his MAGA Republicans want across-the-board tariffs on all imports from all countries, if reelected. Well, that would drive up costs for families on an average of \$1,500 per year each year. He simply doesn't get it.

For years, I've heard many Republicans and even Democratic friends say, "China is not on the rise"—excuse me, "China is on the rise; America is falling behind." I've always believed they got it wrong.

America is rising. We have the best economy in the world. And since I've come into office, the GDP is up, our trade deficit with China is down to the lowest level in over a decade, and we're standing up against Chinese Government unfair economic practices now.

At the same time, we're standing up for peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits. I've revitalized our partnerships with the Pacific allies in India, Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines—Pacific Island nations.

I've made sure the most advanced American technologies we develop or invent can be used by the China—can't be used by the Chinese Government to undermine our national security.

Frankly—before it rains—frankly, for all this tough talk on China, it never occurred to my predecessor to do any of that.

Bottom line: I want fair competition with China, not conflict. And we're in a stronger position to win that economic competition of the 21st century against China than anyone else because we're investing in America again, in American workers.

Let me close—let me close with this. I come from Scranton, a town like a lot of working class, middle class neighborhoods all across America—like Racine, Wisconsin, which I visited last week. Once a manufacturing boomtown until trickle-down economics came along, and the middle class in Racine got hollowed out.

Six years ago, my predecessor showed up carrying a golden shovel, promising, thanks to his new \$10 billion, manufacturing complex would be built in Racine. He said it would be the eighth wonder of the world, big promises that never came true. He used that golden shovel to dig a hole, and then he fell into it. *[Laughter]*

Well, that's not on my—that's not part of my—well, I'm delivering for Racine—delivering. Thanks to the investment of my administration, Microsoft is investing billions to build a new data center in Racine, creating thousands of good-paying jobs.

Because the view from Scranton and towns like it are a lot different than from Mar-a-Lago. It's the view where—that money doesn't determine your worth, everyone is entitled to being treated with dignity and respect, and everyone deserves a fair shot. We leave nobody behind.

That's the America we're building together. That's why I've never been more optimistic about our future. And I'm really going fast because of the rain.

We have—*[laughter]*—that's why we have to remember who we are. We're the United States of America. And there is nothing—there is nothing—beyond our capacity when we do it together.

God bless you all. And better get out of the rain.

Thank you very, very much.

Thank you.

Oh, we've got to sign this.

[At this point, the President moved to the signing desk.]

Q. Mr. President, why wait 3 years for the tariffs?

[The President signed the memorandum titled "Actions by the United States Related to the Statutory 4-Year Review of the Section 301 Investigation of China's Acts, Policies, and Practices Related to Technology Transfer, Intellectual Property, and Innovation."]

The President. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Q. Mr. President—

Q. Mr. President, is Netanyahu going too far in Rafah?

Former President Donald J. Trump

Q. Mr. President, Trump said today, "China is eating our lunch." What do you say in response? He said, "China is eating our lunch." That's what Trump said today.

The President. He's being feeding them a long time. *[Laughter]*

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:32 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Roxanne D. Brown, international vice president at large, United Steelworkers, who introduced the President; Acting Secretary of Labor Julie A. Su; and President Xi Jinping of China. A reporter referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Imposing U.S. tariffs on certain Chinese imports, signing the memorandum; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Brown, Roxanne D.; Dingell, Deborah A.; Slotkin, Elissa B.; Stabenow, Deborah A.; Stevens, Haley M.; Su, Julie A.; Tai, Katherine C.; Trump, Donald J.; Xi Jinping; Yellen, Janet L.

Subjects: Acting Secretary of Labor; Automobile industry, strengthening efforts; China, President; China, trade and economic policies; China, trade with U.S.; China, U.S. tariffs on certain imports; COVID–19 pandemic; Critical minerals, supply chain improvements; Electric and hybrid vehicles, promotion efforts; Electric vehicle charging infrastructure, improvement efforts; Indo-Pacific, economic and security cooperation; Labor movement and organized labor; Manufacturing industry, domestic investment; Secretary of the Treasury; Semiconductor manufacturing; Solar and wind energy, promotion efforts; Taiwan, political status with respect to China; U.S. Trade Representative; United Steelworkers.

DCPD Number: DCPD202400408.