

Remarks by President Trump in Listening Session with Representatives from the Steel and Aluminum Industry



Cabinet Room
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THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much everyone. We have with us the biggest steel companies in the United States. They used to be a lot bigger, but they're going to be a lot bigger again.

And we have the big aluminum companies in the United States. And they've been very unfairly treated by bad policy, by bad trade deals, by other countries. They've been horribly treated by other countries, and they have not been properly represented. More importantly, because of that, workers in our country have not been properly represented.

So we're going to build our steel industry back and we're going to build our aluminum industry back. And I just want you to hear from a couple of the folks in the room. We'll have a few speak.

But I might want to start with Dave Burritt from U.S. Steel. It was a massive company years ago, and got smaller and smaller and smaller. And Dave was with Caterpillar for 35 years —

MR. BURRITT: Thirty-three years, yeah.

THE PRESIDENT: Thirty-three years. And did a great job. They brought him in. He's been there for a short while, and he wants to build it back up.

Dave, maybe you could say a little bit to the room and to the press about U.S. Steel and where they were, where they're going, and what you think of what we're going to do.

MR. BURRITT: Well, thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

MR. BURRITT: And thank you very much for your leadership on this issue. And also, Commerce Secretary, thank you, sir, very much. This is vital to the interests of the United States. This is our moment, and it's really important that we get this right.

The alternatives that the Commerce Secretary presented were all good alternatives, and we trust your judgment, in terms of the ones to be selected. We believe that the leadership that this administration has shown on tax reform is simply outstanding. The elimination of bureaucracy is simply outstanding. We trust your judgment on this issue.

And having been somebody that has global views and believes in free trade, we know when it's completely unfair. We are not protectionists. We want a level playing field. It's for our employees; to support our customers. And when we get this right, it will be great for the United States of America. We have to get this done.

THE PRESIDENT: And for your company and for your workers and for so much else, even the security of our own nation.

MR. BURRITT: Absolutely.

THE PRESIDENT: You like the tariffs that we're talking about. You like the tariffs where they won't be dumping on our country. What they do is they dump massive amounts of product on our country, and it just kills — it destroys our companies and our jobs. And it's been happening for so many years, and we are not the beneficiary.

You feel tariffs are the answer?

MR. BURRITT: Yes, sir. The transshipments that go on, which you are well aware of — we call it the Whac-A-Mole game. It's time for Whac-A-Mole to end. It's time for some fairness here. It's past time.

THE PRESIDENT: People have no idea how badly our country has been treated by other countries, by people representing us that didn't have a clue. Or if they did, then they should be ashamed of themselves because they've destroyed the steel industry, they've destroyed the aluminum industry, and other industries, frankly, when you look at all the plants, the car plants, automobile plants that moved down to Mexico for no reason whatsoever, except we didn't know what we were doing.

So we're bringing it all back. John, could I ask you to say a few words?

MR. FERRIOLA: Absolutely. We believe very strongly — first of all, thank you —

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

MR. FERRIOLA: — for the work that you've done as Secretary. We appreciate all the work that's been done on this issue. We believe very strongly that it's time for decisive and meaningful action to stem the flow of illegally traded imports into this country. And we are counting on the administration to fulfill the promises that were made and to give us that level playing field to compete.

We are confident — we have 25,000 teammates that — I always say, we're confident, if they are given a level playing field, they will out-compete any company and any country in the world. All we want is a level playing field. And, today, we're not getting that. The cheating is phenomenal. The amount of circumvention that takes place is incredible.

Just look at last year. Last year, Mr. President, the imports increased 15 percent in 2017, over 2016. Once we initiated the beginning of the 232, other countries saw this as the need to get in before it went into effect.

So what we're asking for today is fast action and action that will last.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you know, I tell the story that, a couple of months ago, we put tariffs on washing machines coming into the country, because they were dumping the machines all over the place and we had lost our manufacturing abilities for washing machines. Now we have plants being built; put a 30 percent

tariff on. And we have plants being built, and nobody has seen that in many, many years, and it's happening at a rapid pace.

Same thing with the solar panels. We had 32 companies, of which 30 of them were out of business, they were closed. And the two were on mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. They were finished. They would have closed pretty quickly.

And now, the two are doing much better and they're talking about opening seven or eight of the old plants that were closed. And they weren't even so old — the solar panels.

So, a lot of good things could happen. The fact is, we weren't treated, and we haven't been treated fairly by other countries. But I don't blame the other countries. When I was in China, I said, "Listen, President Xi" — I have a lot of respect for President Xi. I said, "I don't blame you." If you're able to get away with making almost \$500 billion a year off of our country, how could I blame you? Somebody agreed to these deals. And those people should be ashamed of themselves, what they've let happen.

So we're bringing it back, and we're going to bring it back relatively rapidly, and we're going to be instituting tariffs. Next week, we'll be signing — perhaps some of you folks will be here. When you have Nucor, when you have U.S. Steel, you have the great aluminum companies represented at this table. And they've been decimated. Aluminum has been decimated in the country.

Perhaps you would say something, as a great aluminum company that's been in business for a long time. How about —

MR. LAPIDES: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: — a few words on aluminum?

MR. LAPIDES: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Secretary Ross and the other members here, Secretary Mnuchin. We're in a situation where competing unfairly has meant that there's been capital depletion in our business, a lack of investment. And that lack of investment is reflected in a loss of jobs in America. And it's all been a matter of unfair competition.

And we need a level playing field, or we're going to lose our manufacturing infrastructure and the national security issues that surround having a vibrant, capable manufacturing sector.

THE PRESIDENT: Okay. We're going to take care of the situation, okay? So steel and aluminum will see a lot of good things happen. We're going to have new jobs popping up. We're going to have much more vibrant companies. And then the rest is going to be up to management to make them truly great. If you could ever make U.S. Steel like it used to be, we'd be very happy. And I actually think it's possible. But you have a long way to go.

I remember when I was growing up, U.S. Steel, that was the ultimate company. And today, you have so many closed plants. And the NAFTA deal was a disaster for our country. The WTO has been a disaster for this country, for our country. In fact, the rise of China, economically, was — if you look at it — directly equal to the date of the opening of the World Trade Organization. It has been great for China and terrible for the United States, and great for other countries. But terrible for the United States.

So we're talking about it, and two of the groups that I want to do some very fast action will probably have everything completed by next week. We'll be imposing tariffs on steel imports, and tariffs on aluminum imports. And you're going to see a lot of good things happen. You're going to see expansions of the companies.

I know that, David, you said you'd be expanding. Tim, I know you said you were expanding.

MR. TIMKEN: Absolutely.

THE PRESIDENT: You're all — pretty much all of you will immediately be expanding if we give you that level playing field, if we give you that help. And you're going to hire more workers, and your workers are going to be very happy. They're going to be very, very happy.

And again, what's been allowed to go on for decades is disgraceful. It's disgraceful. And when it comes to a time when our country can't make aluminum and steel — and somebody said it before, and I will tell you, you almost don't have much of a country. Because without steel and aluminum, your country is not the same. And we need it.

We need it even for defense, if you think. I mean, we need it for defense. We need great steelmakers, great aluminum makers for defense.

So we'll probably see you sometime next week. We'll be signing it in. And you will have protection for the first time in a long while, and you're going to regrow your industries. That's all I'm asking. You have to regrow your industries.

Mr. Secretary, thank you very much for being here. We appreciate it. Mr. Secretary, thank you very much. And we'll see you next week.

Thank you, everybody. Thank you very much.

Q How long, do you think, on the tariffs?

THE PRESIDENT: Unlimited period. Unlimited.

Q Twenty-five on steel?

THE PRESIDENT: Twenty-five percent for steel. It will be 10 percent for aluminum. And it will be for a long period of time.

Q Do you have comment on Jeff Sessions, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

Q Twenty-five for steel and ten for aluminum?

THE PRESIDENT: Twenty-five for steel and ten for aluminum.

Q (Inaudible.)

THE PRESIDENT: It's being written now.

Q Thank you, sir.

END

12:28 P.M. EST