

NEWS



from the United Steelworkers of America

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Thousands from America's Steel Communities Rally at the White House, Imploring the President to Impose 40% Tariffs on Imported Steel

Pittsburgh -- A crowd of nearly 30,000 from Steel communities throughout America's industrial heartland rallied outside the White House today, loudly urging President Bush to implement the International Trade Commission's (ITC) recommendation of 40% tariffs on imported steel products.

Tens of thousands of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) members -- many from among the more than 46,000 who have already lost their jobs as a result of 31 steel bankruptcies and 17 liquidations during the current crisis -- were joined in a massive show of support by aging retirees and surviving steelworker spouses, AFL-CIO leaders, community advocates and federal, state and municipal leaders, largely from Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Maryland -- states the Bush Administration recognizes as crucial to the 2002 Congressional elections as well as a presidential reelection bid.

"President Bush has a choice to make and he has the power to make it," USWA President Leo W. Gerard told the cheering throng. "He can face up to the facts and impose the 40% tariffs that the ITC has documented are necessary to stop the devastation being done to American steel.

"Or he can turn his back on the facts and on the 200,000 steelworkers and 600,000 steelworker retirees and their communities by offering up half-baked tariffs that will be nothing short of a blueprint for nation's abroad to continue violating our laws at the expense of American steelworkers who gave their sweat, their blood and even their lives to make this country as strong as steel."

As the crowd repeatedly chanted, "40% for four years," Gerard asked, "Where's the justice in letting importers who patently break our trade laws brutally break the hopes and dreams of American families? Where's the justice in trading away the health care benefits of retirees to placate those who are decimating American steel mills and steel communities?"

"Why should we settle for less than 40%," he said, "when unfair trade over the past three decades has wiped out 56-million tons of American steelmaking capacity and more than a quarter million steelworker jobs?"

"Twenty-two million tons have been lost since this President and other members of his Administration said they would level the playing field. How much longer will they allow themselves to keep being bullied by the illegal dumpers and foreign competitors?"

"We don't have a trade policy," Gerard insisted. "We've got an employment policy for illegal foreign dumpers. That's not competition, and it's sure as hell not 'free trade.' That's industrial suicide -- and we're not about to let this nation commit industrial suicide so other nations can keep exporting their unemployment to the United States."

The rally today – one of the larger in recent years -- was a culmination of more than 40 rallies and community meetings attended by more than 25,000 citizens over the past three weeks in the nation's industrial heartland. Participants streamed into the capital from as far away as Tyler, Texas and the iron range of northern Minnesota, traveling by auto and on more than 275 buses. A dozen high school bands from steel communities even made the trek.

The unusually large rally is expected to bolster those within the Administration who are advocating strong tariff remedies on the grounds that taking such action offers the President a rare opportunity to satisfy the concerns of critical voters by implementing actions that have been thoroughly documented and advocated by an independent, bipartisan agency such as the ITC.

In anticipation of the rally, the legislatures of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, Utah and Alabama, as well as many cities and municipalities, have already passed resolutions -- many of them unanimously -- supporting the maximum tariff relief.