

Testimony of Representative Mike Bost
Before the United States Department of Commerce / United States Trade Representative
April 12, 2016

Thank you for holding today's hearings. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss a very important discussion that hits home for many families in my district.

I'll be brief so you can hear directly from those impacted by the steel crisis – local officials and the steelworkers themselves.

Steel production has always faced ups and downs, but today's market conditions are the worst in years. Today's crisis isn't just about supply and demand. There's less drilling... more regulations... and higher production costs.

But let's not forget one of the main causes of this crisis comes from overseas – with the non-market policies of competitors like China. These policies have created an unequal situation for American steel producers.

When countries like China intervene in the market, they continue producing steel exports at below fair market value. This allows them to flood the U.S. market and undercut domestic companies.

The consequences are measured not just on a balance sheet, but in the loss of many thousands of good-paying jobs. In my home of Southern Illinois, Granite City Works has stopped production and idled nearly 2,000 steel jobs. We still have no idea when they can return to work.

These are hard working men and women. Some are second or third generation steelworkers. They have families to feed, and they deserve to be angry.

Fair trade shouldn't be a partisan issue. Many Republicans and many Democrats speak with one voice on this. When American workers lose their jobs due to unfair and illegal trade, they must have tools to protect themselves.

Last year, Congress passed legislation I introduced to strengthen America's trade remedy laws. Too often, anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations forced domestic companies to suffer permanent damage before they could seek help.

I'm a firefighter by trade. That process would be like forcing a homeowner watch their home burn to the ground before they could call the fire department. It makes no sense.

Because Congress acted in a bipartisan fashion, we now have tools to put the fire out when the first sparks ignite. The law now allows the government to select the most adverse facts available if a foreign firm refuses to cooperate with an investigation.

It also allows a company to prove injury when unfairly traded imports result in a loss of income or profit. Further, it permits the Department of Commerce to more quickly impose preliminary and final tariffs on illegally-traded products.

These measures are fully compliant with existing trade agreements. We shouldn't hesitate to us them.

We've taken some steps in the right direction with rulings on recent anti-dumping and countervailing duty petitions. However, it's the final determinations that will give domestic companies the certainty they need to begin producing steel once again.

In addition, I wish to add my voice to those opposing granting China Market Economy Status at the WTO. China is not a market economy. And granting them this concession could make it more difficult to fight steel and other product dumping.

In closing, I urge you to please remember the voices of our steelworkers here today. They are on the front lines of this battle. And they are hurting. Let's continue to fight for them.