

Gov. Walker: Weekly Radio Address: President Trump should reconsider steel, aluminum tariffs

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MADISON – Governor Scott Walker released his Weekly Radio Address today titled “President Trump Should Reconsider Steel, Aluminum Tariffs.”

If President Donald Trump wants to protect good-paying, family-supporting jobs here in Wisconsin, I respectfully ask that he reconsider tariffs on steel and aluminum. I believe that these tariffs will cost us jobs instead of protecting them.

Last Friday, I was honored to join the employees at United Alloy in Janesville to announce a multi-million-dollar expansion of their company that will create new good-paying, family-supporting jobs. This is a stark contrast to eight years ago when the unemployment rate in Janesville was 10.4% at the start of 2010. Now, it is down to 2.7% because employers like United Alloy are continuing to grow.

While touring the plant, I asked them about the tariffs announced last week. They said it would disrupt the market and that many of their customers were concerned about the negative impact.

We’ve heard similar things from other great Wisconsin employers like MillerCoors, Milwaukee Tools, Seneca Foods and Harley Davidson.

In addition to overall concerns about the larger market, there are some very specific problems for employers here in Wisconsin:

Bemis Company, based in Neenah, Wisconsin provides a great example of why the tariffs on aluminum will cost American jobs instead of protecting them. Bemis

employs about 9,000 people in America. Of that, about 5,000 are in Wisconsin with others in places like Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Bemis uses ultra-thin foil gauges less than 0.0003 inches thick for things like ketchup packets, cream cheese packaging, powdered food and beverages and for medical device packages. There is only one producer of this converter foil in America. The total output of that entire company cannot meet Bemis' current requirements – let alone those of similar companies throughout Wisconsin and across America. Plus, that company is not able to produce the ultra-thin foil gauges needed for much of Bemis' and other companies core work.

So, if the tariffs go into place, it will not only cause major disruption in the market and drive prices up, it will likely cause layoffs and plant closures with jobs and operations shifting to other countries. For example, a company in Wisconsin would likely look at their costs and realize it would be easier to close operations here and move the equipment to Canada where there is no tariff on the ultra-thin foil and then make products that will not face a tariff coming into the American market.

Bemis officials met with me last June to explain their specific concerns. Other Wisconsin employers have expressed similar issues to me.

With this in mind, I took their concerns to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross last summer. He understood the issue and assured me that they would try to address these very real concerns. Unfortunately, the plan announced last week does not do that.

The goal of the President's administration – I believe – is to protect American workers. Unfortunately, the practical application here of the tariff on steel and aluminum would lead to jobs being lost in Wisconsin and moved – not to other states – but to other countries. My job is to fight for the people of Wisconsin. That is why I respectfully ask the President of the United States to reconsider this policy.