

Tom Duerst: Keep Wisconsin moving forward

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Life in the great state of Wisconsin is both a treasure and a privilege. Our state is home to multiple universities and colleges, many professional sports teams, and most importantly, a thriving business community.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, when businesses across the state were facing hardships, Wisconsin businesses were fortunate to be allocated [240 million in grants](#) from the state's federally funded "We're All In" program. This is a prime example of Wisconsin businesses being at the center of the conversation of moving the state forward.

However, some of our businesses run the risk of not thriving to their fullest potential due to our nation's ongoing trade war with China. Currently, the Biden administration is continuing tariffs set by the Trump administration on certain products imported from China. The Trump administration placed these taxes on over \$350 billion worth of goods imported into the United States from China in what it claimed was an effort to [punish China, slow their global growth, and boost American exports](#). Unfortunately, this trade war only punished America, specifically American businesses, farmers, consumers, and workers.

American businesses are being punished by these tariffs because they are the ones who end up paying higher taxes on imports – not China.

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Placing tariffs on imported Chinese products never stopped businesses from needing them, either. Businesses still need these goods and inputs to sustain their

business operations and end up paying the higher prices at their own expense. Simply put: this trade war backfired.

Not only are these tariffs ineffective and harmful, but China is still not upholding its promise within the deal it signed with the Trump administration in January of 2020 to purchase American agriculture products, industrial products, natural resources, and services. However, under this “Phase One” trade deal, China [only purchased 60 percent](#) of its promised imports. Despite this, United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai has made [no clear plans](#) to alter course, lift the tariffs, and help our businesses.

In Wisconsin, two of our major economic enterprises are manufacturing and agriculture, and China agreed to purchase [specific amounts of agricultural and manufactured goods](#) from the United States as part of the Phase One Agreement. Unsurprisingly, they failed to do so. If we aren’t enforcing the specifications of this deal, then why do we continue enforcing these tariffs? The pandemic and ongoing supply chain crisis have led many businesses to pass along these additional costs to consumers.

All Wisconsinites deserve better than this. In 2019, Wisconsin imported [over 28 billion](#) dollars worth of goods, and of the top 10 countries that our state imports from, [China was number one](#).

We need to do right by Wisconsinites, and it starts with Congress. Unfortunately, we are losing a long-time critic of the trade war with Congressman Ron Kind’s (D-WI-3) [retirement](#). Representative Kind frequently spoke out against the trade war with China saying it [hurt farmers](#) in the state and has [pointed out the direct consequences](#) of the tariffs in Wisconsin, like the \$894 million in tariffs paid by Wisconsinites. Let’s hope that whoever fills Representative Kind’s shoes champions businesses and speaks out against the trade war as he has.

Merely relying on hope isn’t enough to protect businesses in our state. We need President Joe Biden and Ambassador Tai to realize the harm they are causing and stop these tariffs. Every day our businesses across the country are struggling because of this trade war. We need all of Washington and the Biden administration to take immediate action and terminate tariffs on Chinese imports. We need to keep moving Wisconsin forward and to do that we need to keep our businesses moving forward. After all, our state’s slogan is simply, “Forward.”

- *Duerst lives in Verona and helps run his family's 800-acre century farm in Dane County.*