

Opportunity Wisconsin: ICYMI: La Crosse small business owners sound the alarm on tariff costs, call on Van Orden to act

Posted on Friday, Mar 6, 2026

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

La Crosse Tribune and News 8000 highlight Opportunity Wisconsin and Main Street Action roundtable discussion

LA CROSSE, Wis. — Yesterday, Opportunity Wisconsin and Main Street Action hosted a roundtable in La Crosse with small business owners from across the region to discuss the real costs tariffs are having on their businesses and their customers. The event followed the Trump administration's [announcement](#) earlier this week that new global tariffs would increase to 15%, further driving up costs for families and small businesses.

Participants highlighted Congressman Derrick Van Orden's previous votes in favor of illegal tariffs that were struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court. Van Orden has remained silent on new tariffs and refuses to stand up to the Trump administration as they continue to threaten the success of entrepreneurs across Wisconsin.

While costs continue to rise, [new economic data released today](#) showed an unexpected 92,000 jobs lost across the country in February while unemployment increased.

[La Crosse Tribune: Uncertainty, cost of tariffs hit River Valley Region businesses hard, local owners say](#)

- “We’re still a small company, but we import almost half a million pounds of coffee a year from around the world,” said TJ Semanchin, owner of Wonderstate Coffee in Viroqua. “This is a product that we can’t replace domestically.”
- Omega Bakery owner Sarah Burns said ingredient costs for her gluten-free bakery in Holmen have risen significantly due to tariffs.
- “My sweet rice flour has gone up 53% in the last year, and tapioca starch has gone up 68%, unsweetened cocoa powder has gone up 43%, white premier chocolate has gone up 74% in the last year, chocolate chips have gone up 50%. That’s significant,” Burns said. “We’re not growing these specialty flours that I need to make gluten-free baked goods. ... Everything I get from outside of the country has increased significantly in the past year.”
- “My business had been growing pretty significantly year after year, until 2025, when I had an 8% decrease in sales – but it wasn’t a decrease in customers. People were just not buying as much,” she said.
- “I’ve had growth for seven years straight. This past year, I would say my purchasing was down 30% from what it would have been. ... Likewise, my business is down that much,” said Michael Grady, owner of Elite Tonewoods, a wood supplier in West Salem. “I directly blame that on tariffs and uncertainty.”
- “I think it’s really important that folks in D.C. understand how this is impacting small businesses,” Semanchin said. “It feels that the largest weight of this is on small family businesses. If he cares about the economy in western Wisconsin, we really need them to repeal all the tariffs.”

[News 8000: La Crosse business owners discuss tariff impacts with county supervisor](#)

- Small business owners in La Crosse County are voicing concerns about how tariffs are affecting their operations, meeting with local officials to discuss the economic impact on their companies.
- Business owners gathered with La Crosse County Supervisor Kelly Leibold to address how trade policies are affecting local enterprises.

- The meeting brought together representatives from various industries to discuss the challenges they face due to increased import costs.
- “Everything was slowed down; everything was more expensive. Aside from the tariffs, the fees from customs and border patrol have gone up,” said Mike Grady, owner of Elite Tonewoods.