



Footwear & Politics

By Thomas Crockett • May 05, 2026

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Below are a few quick updates on FDRA’s testimony at today’s 301 investigation into structural excess capacity/overproduction, the 301 investigation into forced labor, and FDRA’s advocacy efforts.

301 investigation #2: overproduction?



This morning, I testified before the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) in the 301 investigation into 16 countries — including China, the EU, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Mexico, and India — over structural excess capacity and overproduction.

- **Tell me more:** More tariffs are the likely remedy here ... as USTR looks to rebuild the tariff regime struck down by the Supreme Court in February. We are using every opportunity possible — including the public hearing process — to urge USTR to take a more tailored tariff approach when it comes to footwear.

What we said at the hearing:

- Consumer demand drives footwear production. To meet consumer demand, the U.S. market imports over 2 billion pairs of shoes each year — 6 pairs of shoes for every man, woman, and child in America — and that number has barely changed over 23 years.
- The administration’s actions toward China *accelerated a sourcing shift away from China* and into countries like Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and India.
- For footwear, trade imbalances in these countries are not the result of foreign government policies (as assumed by the investigation); they are the natural outcome of U.S. demand and this sourcing shift.
- Increasing the footwear tariff burden, through new added 301 tariffs, will result in higher costs for hardworking American families at a time when they already face tremendous economic uncertainty.

One key point:

Those companies that undertook the difficult and costly multi-year task of shifting sourcing outside of China, at the urging of the Trump administration, now face the prospect of 301 tariffs because of production increases outside of China.

[Read FDRA's testimony](#)

FDRA Advocacy Day on May 20th



We are planning our next congressional advocacy day for Wednesday, May 20th. We will meet with key Republican members of Congress and congressional staff to urge them to reach out to the administration on the need for footwear tariff relief.

- Thank you to the companies that have committed to join us on the Hill to advocate on this critical issue.
- Given the timeliness of our issues and the Hill schedule, we need a commitment by this Friday (May 8th). We will be creating a very targeted approach to which members and staff we meet with based upon company representation. We appreciate your understanding of this deadline.
- Please let us know ASAP if you have an interest in joining us on May 20th. You can email me at tcrockett@fdra.org.

301 investigation #1: forced labor bans



ICYMI: FDRA filed written comments for USTR’s investigation into whether 60 different economies are implementing and enforcing forced labor bans. This investigation will be used to build another part of the tariff regime.

What we said in our comments:

- FDRA submitted two separate sets of comments in this key investigation — one on behalf of the footwear industry (read [here](#)) and another with several associations as part of the Forced Labor Working Group (read [here](#)).
- In FDRA’s comments, we highlighted our industry’s longstanding commitment to ensuring footwear supply chains remain free of forced labor as well as the many ways we work to combat forced labor.
- We argued that USTR should not focus solely on a forced labor ban when examining whether nations are effectively addressing forced labor. We also stressed that added 301 tariffs will hurt U.S. consumers without any benefit to the U.S. AND 301 tariffs could actually undermine efforts to address forced labor, by reducing improvements in developing nations.

One key point:

Imposing tariffs as a remedy could have the unintended consequence of reducing improvements in developing nations. U.S. footwear brands sourcing in foreign countries export U.S. values and high standards to those countries. These investments can improve economic conditions for workers in developing nations and help lift individuals out of poverty. This is a critical tool for the U.S. in the fight against forced labor.

[Read FDRA's Comments](#)

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Matt and Thomas

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