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ICYMI: History Warns Against Tariffs—Industries Brace for Higher Costs

FDRA highlights how past tariff hikes have hurt American consumers, raising footwear prices and shrinking choices

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In case you missed it, today’s [Axios Macro](#) newsletter highlighted the **Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America’s (FDRA)** critical insights on the economic consequences of tariffs ahead of President Trump’s anticipated "Liberation Day" announcement. As he prepares to unveil his reciprocal tariffs plan during a White House event in the Rose Garden, FDRA is warning history shows tariffs consistently lead to higher consumer costs, economic strain, and industry-wide disruption—outcomes that today’s footwear industry is bracing for once again.

According to a new [FDRA briefing](#), past tariff hikes—from the 1890 McKinley Tariff to the Smoot-Hawley Tariff of the 1930s—have resulted in price spikes, trade retaliation, and economic downturns. The Trump administration’s 2018 trade war similarly drove up costs for everyday goods like clothing and footwear. With the latest round of tariffs looming, footwear companies fear another wave of price increases, product shrinkflation, and reduced consumer choice.

“Regardless of the era, the consequences of high tariffs and retaliations remain largely the same,” said **Andy Polk, FDRA Senior Vice President**. “When costs rise, consumers lose. History tells us that these policies don’t just impact businesses—they hit American families at the checkout line.”

FDRA’s analysis highlights that footwear remains one of the most heavily tariffed consumer goods, with duty rates on some children’s shoes exceeding 90%. Any additional tariffs threaten to compound economic pressures on working families, particularly as the cost of essential goods continues to climb.

“President McKinley later regretted his high-tariff policies, and history may repeat itself,” **added Polk**. “We urge the administration to take a targeted, thoughtful approach that avoids placing unnecessary burdens on consumers and businesses.”

FDRA will continue to monitor the situation closely and advocate for policies that promote affordability, innovation, and economic stability for the footwear industry and American consumers alike.

Recent Coverage on Footwear and Inflation Trends:

1. [Axios – 1 big thing: The ghosts of trade wars past](#)
2. [Footwear News – FDRA: Q1 Exec Sentiment Is Most Pessimistic in Survey History](#)
3. [Footwear News – FDRA’s Matt Priest Says Trump’s Additional 10% Tariff on China Would Be ‘Catastrophic’ for Some Shoe Companies](#)

Visit the [FDRA website](#) for more information. To schedule an interview with Matt Priest on the state of the footwear industry, please email fdracomms@cgagroup.com.

About FDRA

FDRA is governed and directed by footwear executives and is the only trade organization focused solely on the footwear industry. Serving the full footwear supply chain, it boosts its members’ bottom lines through innovative products, training, consulting on footwear design and development, sourcing and compliance, trade and customs, advocacy, and consumer and sales trend analysis for shoe retailers around the world. FDRA supports 500 companies and brands worldwide, representing 95% of the total U.S. footwear industry. Learn more: fdra.org