USW Request for 201 Safeguard on Tires – Basics Fact Sheet

Introduction

On September 14, 2026, the United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union, commonly known as the United Steelworkers (USW) requested that the United States Trade Representative (USTR) initiate a Section 201 safeguard investigation because the union believes a surge of tire imports have negatively impacted American workers and harmed the domestic industry.

Why did the union request this action?

Since late 2024, 9 tire plants in the U.S. have fully or partially closed or announced their imminent closure. In addition, several facilities have reduced work hours or shipped production equipment offshore, while imports have surged into the domestic market. More than 7,550 jobs have been lost in tire manufacturing in the past 2 years alone. Meanwhile, imports into the U.S. market have increased dramatically in recent years.

What is a Section 201 safeguard investigation?

Section 201 of the Trade Act of 1974 is a “safeguard” that protects a U.S. industry that has been seriously harmed by a surge of imports of the same or a similar product. Safeguards are trade relief measures temporary (up to four years) that range from increased duties against imports, tariff-rate quotas (TRQ), or other actions that facilitate fair trade in the tire industry.

Who can start a Section 201 safeguard investigation?

A petition can be submitted through multiple pathways including by unions, trade associations, or companies, but investigations may also be triggered by a resolution from the Congressional trade committees, the International Trade Commission (ITC) or by USTR. The union has requested that USTR initiate the investigation.

What are the next steps?

Should USTR move forward and request a 201-safeguard investigation, the United States International Trade Commission (ITC) will begin a two-phase investigative process that will take up to nine months. An independent commission, the ITC will consider factors such as the idling of production facilities, import trends, reduced profitability at domestic firms, and significant unemployment or underemployment in the U.S. industry. It will also conduct a public hearing.

The six commissioners of the ITC will vote on the results of the investigation and relief recommendations. If the ITC makes an affirmative determination, they will send the report and recommendations to the president who can then act on the ITC report.

Relief measures can last for at least four years but may be extended another four years.

What solution does the union hope for?

USW members in the tire sector should not face a flood of imports from multiple countries. Tires from countries like Serbia, Cambodia, Peru, and multiple other jurisdictions have surged into the U.S. market sometimes by up to 429 percent. Multi-national firms based in the People's Republic of China have built new tire plants in multiple countries to avoid anti-dumping and countervailing duties.

A well-structured, successful safeguard will stop the bleeding of U.S. jobs, and aid in rebuilding the domestic tire industry.

Are 201 Safeguards Common?

Yes, since 1975 more than 75 section 201 investigations have been initiated.[1] There are three active investigations currently on USTR's website on products including Lamb Meat, Residential Washing Machines, and imported solar cells and modules.[2]

Why not file an anti-dumping and countervailing duty petition?

USW has successfully petitioned the ITC for dumping and subsidy relief (AD/CVD). USW's efforts have resulted in the imposition of AD/CVD duties on PVLT tires from China, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam, TBT tires from China and Thailand, and OTR tires from India. However, AD/CVD investigations are time intensive, must be filed and fought individually for each country (although investigations can occur simultaneously) and relief is limited only to duties (tariffs). A 201 safeguard can create global solutions and has additional flexibility over AD/CVD petitions.

Can Section 201 Safeguards adjust imports from all countries?

Yes, however the 201-safeguard law has special provisions related to countries that have a free trade agreement with the United States, including USMCA. Imports from Canada for most major tire segments have decreased in recent years while imports from Mexico have increased. In addition, multiple Rapid Response Mechanism cases in the tire sector have been filed against employers in Mexico over labor law violations. The union believes relief will be necessary on imports from Mexico.

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[1] https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF10786

[2] https://ustr.gov/issue-areas/enforcement/section-201-investigations/investigation-no-ta-201-75-cspv-cells