

Dear Speaker Krowinski, Representative Marcotte, and Senator Ram Hinsdale,

I am the president of the Guild of Vermont Furniture Makers, a group of master level professional furniture makers running independent wood shops throughout Vermont. I just read an article in Vermont Business Magazine about the hearings that are going to be held on Wednesday morning about the impact of the Trump tariffs on Vermonters and Vermont businesses. I cannot attend the hearings, so I am writing to send my comments.

I was on a zoom call this evening with several of my fellow Guild members, and when I asked "how's business?", everyone on the call unanimously said business is extremely slow. Some members have had orders slow to a trickle, while others have seen new orders completely dry up during these past months of Trump chaos, DOGE wreckage of federal agencies, mass layoffs of federal workers, tariffs, and all indicators and financial experts pointing to a recession. Stock market hits and recessions are incredibly bad for small businesses. People do not buy custom handmade furniture when the economy is unstable or in deep recession, or when the stock market is plummeting. For those of us who sell to foreign customers, the tariffs make it even worse.

And to put this in perspective, over the past 4 years prior to Trump, many of our Guild members had huge, ongoing and steady backlogs of orders, from 8 to 12+ months. A stable economy is good for business, not intentional chaos and disruption from Washington.

One of our Guild members told me tonight that he just completed a large furniture order for some customers in Canada. The order is ready to ship, but now it is in a holding pattern, where he and his customers do not know what to do, because the Trump tariffs have caused a reciprocal defensive tariff of 25% imposed by Canada on incoming American goods. So these handmade pieces of fine furniture, made in Vermont for Canadian customers is now going to cost them 25% more. And these are expensive pieces of furniture, so the increase in cost is very significant.

These dumb policies from Trump and his loyalist, sycophant GOP backers are shameful, incredibly damaging, and like Trump's past policies and his own failed business record, not at all well thought out. Not only does it kill business for Vermont small businesses like this 3 person woodshop in our Guild, but they severely damage relations with our great neighbors to the north, who have spent so much money in the past supporting artisans and small producers in Vermont.

I would also like to add that I have several friends who are craft artists who sell their work at the Burlington and Stowe farmers markets. In the past, both of those markets have always drawn a lot of Canadian tourists who bought their wares. The wildfire smoke and severe rain and flooding events the last 2 years (climate impacts which the GOP is in denial about) had already had an impact in reducing the turnout at the markets, but this year my friends are fearful that the farmers markets may not be sustainable for them to even do, between a recession and the Canadian tourists not there to buy their work. Just more negative impacts on small Vermont businesses, caused by these failed Trump policies.

Thank you for holding the hearings. I hope my feedback can be shared with both the House and Senate committees, if you could please pass this along for me.

Sincerely,

David Hurwitz
President, Guild of Vermont Furniture Makers