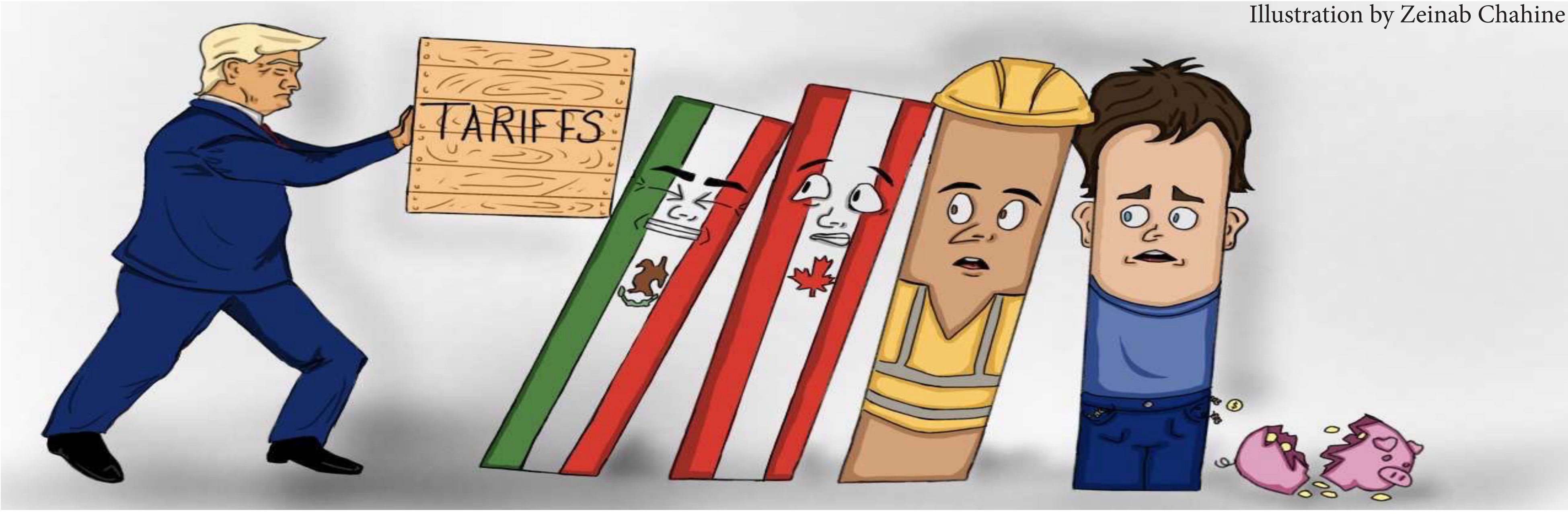
Illustration by Zeinab Chahine



The Hidden Cost of Tariffs: How Washington's Decisions Are Impacting Everyday Americans

Deana Baydoun
Sports Editor
Advertisement Editor

It's easy to forget that every decision made in Washington has consequences as real, tangible ones. When tariffs were imposed on Mexico and Canada, the effects spread across borders, reaching everyday American families, including hardworking people in Dearborn, Michigan. The reality is that these tariffs are not just numbers on a spreadsheet; they are the reason why your grocery bill is rising and your job security might be at risk. Is it worth it?

Imposing tariffs on Mexico and Canada is harming the U.S. economy by raising costs for consumers, causing job losses, and disrupting supply chains. Tariffs are nothing but hidden taxes on American consumers. For example, when steel and aluminum tariffs were introduced in 2018, it wasn't just major companies that felt the impact, it was you, the consumer. The price of everything from cars to cans of soda went up.

According to the Peterson Institute of International Economics (PIIE), "The average American family ended up paying an additional $1,000 per year due to tariffs." (1st graph, Clausing) For many families, that amount is overwhelming.

It's frustrating to realize that the policy meant to protect U.S industries has ended up costing average Americans. Rather than seeing cheaper goods or stronger economic growth, we're paying more for the same products, and many small businesses are struggling just to stay in business. As in city like Dearborn who has a huge variety of small businesses, this becomes overwhelming. How much longer are we willing to sacrifice for a policy that does nothing positive for the working class?

When Mexico and Canada retaliated with tariffs of their own, the U.S suffered the impact. For years, these two nations have been some of our most valuable trade partners, yet we chose to jeopardize those relationships.

As a result, U.S. farmers, manufacturers, and small business owners lost billions of dollars in trade. According to Apnews, "America exported more than $1.8 billion worth of chicken and another $8.4 billion in red meat to Mexico, Canada and China. These tariffs could easily lead to a 10% drop in exports." (paragraph 15, Funk)

Trade wars can quickly get out of hand, and soon enough, it's the average worker whose job relies on global trade that ends up paying for it.In fact, Dearborn's steelworkers were directly affected by the rising costs of production. Earlier this year, 600 steelworkers in the region were laid off due to a drop in U.S auto production, which is a consequence from tariffs These are people with families who now face an uncertain future. How much longer are we going to let tariffs cost American jobs, while other countries take advantage of our mistakes?

It's not just the economy that's suffering; U.S, Mexico, Canada relations have been severely harmed. Our neighbors to the north and south share common goals in fighting climate change, but tariffs have caused a gap that's tough to fix. We've lost our reputation as a trustworthy trade partner, and trust between us and other countries is weaker than ever.

In response to escalating trade tensions. According to Reuters, "Canada could impose non-tariff measures such as restricting its oil exports to the United States… "(paragraph 1, Renshaw) This could mess up the energy market and make it harder for both countries to work together on essential issues like reducing carbon emissions.

Is this what we want for our future? The economic and international consequences of reckless decisions will take years to undo. Our international standing is at risk and the consequences could stretch beyond just a few tariffed goods. We might have just created the conditions for future trade problems that could leave the U.S. isolated and weaker in the global market.

Some argue that tariffs help protect American jobs by making products in the U.S more affordable. By taxing foreign imports, the government encourages people to buy more American-made goods, which could strengthen U.S. industries. While that might sound like a good idea, the reality is that many American industries rely on international trade to stay profitable. Instead of protecting jobs, tariffs have caused businesses to lose revenue, leading to layoffs and factory shutdowns. In the end, everyday workers and consumers pay the price.

Rather than continuing to escalate trade wars, the U.S should prioritize strengthening trade agreements like the USMCA (United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement) and focus on international negotiations over tariffs. By doing so, we can stabilize relationships with countries that are crucial to our economy, rebuild trust, and promote a more sustainable economic future.

The time for a shift in approach is now before the damage becomes irreversible. We need to rebuild and strengthen the foundation of international trade that will benefit not only the U.S economy but the global economy as a whole.