



01 May 2026

Trade Lines

Policy Intelligence for Global Business Leaders

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Washington Council EY*

Trade Lines brings you timely updates from DC on global trade and regulatory policy. Curated for business leaders and decision-makers, this newsletter highlights key shifts in trade policy – from tariff shifts and supply chain disruptions to legislative developments and compliance trends. Stay ahead, evaluate impact, and make informed decisions in a rapidly changing environment.

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Policy Pulse

USTR opens public comment period on AGOA modernization

On April 29, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) published a [Federal Register notice](#) soliciting public comments on reforms to the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). According to the notice, “USTR will provide recommendations to Congress on reforms and modernizations to AGOA to ensure the program meets the needs of American workers and businesses, advances U.S. national security and

economic security goals, optimizes balanced bilateral trade flows with beneficiary countries, and provides a path for reciprocal trade agreements with the more advanced countries as they develop and graduate from the program.” Public comments are due on May 15, 2026.

AGOA was reauthorized in February through the end of 2026. USTR Jamieson Greer recently indicated in testimony before the Ways and Means Committee that reforming the program is a key priority for the Trump Administration.

CBP provides update on initial refund claims

In an April 28 [declaration](#) to the Court of International Trade (CIT), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) detailed the status of Phase 1 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) tariff refunds following the April 20 opening of the Consolidated Administration and Processing of Entries (CAPE) refund portal. CBP indicated that the system is functioning as intended, with only a brief glitch after the opening of the portal that prevented importers and brokers from accessing the system. The progress report indicated that as of 8pm on April 26, the system had received 75,306 declarations and had begun processing 47,315 of those declarations. Over 11 million entries have been validated and 1.74 million of those entries entered the final stages of the refund process.

On the same day, CBP participated in a closed-door conference before the CIT in *Euro-Notions Florida v. United States*, the lead case related to IEEPA tariff refunds. In an order filed after the proceedings, Judge Eaton summarized further updates on the refund process from CBP and detailed challenges facing importers using the CAPE system. During the proceedings, CBP confirmed that, “approximately 21% of the total entries that were entered subject to IEEPA duties have been accepted for the removal of IEEPA duties through CAPE, and roughly 3% have been liquidated through CAPE and are in the refund stage of the process.” CBP also estimated that the first refunds are likely to go out on or around May 11.

During the conference, participants also shared challenges with the CAPE system, including, “problems accessing ACE, due to, for example, long wait-times to reset usernames and passwords, over-registration of training events, and confusion with respect to identifying the correct importer to make a CAPE declaration.” They also flagged questions around calculations of interest on refunds, the continued collection of IEEPA duties on reconciliation entries, and a lack of clarity on refunds for more complicated entries.

Judge Eaton directed CBP to provide a progress report on Phase 1 of the refund process by 12pm on May 12.

USTR holds public hearing on Sec. 301 investigation on forced labor

This week, an interagency panel led by USTR held a public hearing on the Section 301 investigations into forced labor import bans. Over two days, the panel heard from a [broad list of stakeholders](#), including representatives of the business community, organized labor, civil service groups, and foreign governments named in the investigation.

Witnesses representing importers commented on the potential unintended consequences or spillover effects of potential tariffs stemming from the investigation, including impacts on consumers, supply chain resiliency, and broader economic harm. Numerous witnesses also proposed policy solutions beyond tariffs to combat the use of forced labor, including greater engagement and technical support from the US to advance forced labor bans. Other witnesses, primarily representing domestic industry, made the case for tariffs as a counterbalance to insufficient standards related to forced labor. Foreign government witnesses frequently pointed to their efforts to address forced labor and in some cases raised questions about whether the US government is able to point to specific policies and practices related to forced labor that burden U.S. commerce.

USTR Releases 2026 Special 301 Report on Intellectual Property Protection and Enforcement, names Vietnam a Priority Foreign Country

On April 30, USTR released its [2026 Special 301 Report](#) detailing its analysis of the effectiveness of U.S. trading partners at protecting intellectual property rights. Notably, the report names Vietnam as a Priority Foreign Country, an infrequent designation for countries deemed to have particularly egregious actions related to intellectual property. USTR will evaluate and determine within 30 days whether to initiate an investigation into these practices under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974.

US lifts tariffs on UK whiskey

Following this week's visit to the US by King Charles and Queen Camilla, President Trump announced that he would remove tariffs on whiskey from the UK, including scotch. Trump posted on Truth Social that, "In Honor of the King and Queen of the United Kingdom, who have just left the White House, soon headed back to their wonderful Country, I will be removing the Tariffs and Restrictions on Whiskey having to do with Scotland's ability to work with the Commonwealth of Kentucky on Whiskey and Bourbon, two very important Industries within Scotland and Kentucky. People have wanted to do this for a long time, in that there had been great Inter-Country Trade, especially having to do with the Wooden Barrels used. The King and Queen got me to do something that nobody else was able to do, without hardly even asking!"

The post was followed with a statement by USTR Greer, highlighting last year's US-UK trade deal and confirmed that, "As part of the EPD, the U.S. and UK have decided that in continuing its implementation, the United States will allow preferential duty access for whiskey produced in the United Kingdom, along with preferential treatment for other American and British goods."

Hill Highlights

Cortez Masto urges Administration to avoid Sec. 301 tariffs on oil and energy imports

This week, Senator Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) sent a [letter](#) to USTR Jamieson Greer urging him to ensure that no tariffs are levied on gas and energy imports as an outcome of the sweeping Section 301 investigations into forced labor and excess manufacturing capacity. Cortez Masto highlights that the

administration's trade policies have largely exempted energy imports thus far, while at the same time raises concerns that certain energy goods seem to be a target of the Section 301 investigations into excess capacity due to certain trading partners having a trade surplus in those goods. She also comments that energy prices have increased recently due to the conflict in Iran and warns that new tariffs on these goods would further exacerbate this issue.

House Appropriations subcommittee advances funding for trade agencies

On April 30, the House Appropriations Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee advanced legislation that included FY27 funding for a number of agencies including the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the Bureau of Industry and Security, and the International Trade Administration, largely reflecting funding levels in the President's FY27 budget. Funding levels included:

- \$95 million for the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, a \$7 million increase from FY26
- \$450 million for the Bureau of Industry and Security, a \$215 million increase from FY26
- \$420 million for the International Trade Administration, a \$146.8 million decrease from FY26

The increased funding for BIS is largely expected to be used for increased trade enforcement. Democrats criticized the cuts to the ITA, with House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro commenting, "Unfair trade practices were another reason given for President Trump's trade wars. Yet the Republican proposal is to take resources away from a very pivotal agency that combats these same tactics."

The legislation advanced out of the subcommittee on a party line basis and now goes to the full committee for further consideration.

Key Dates

May 5: USTR holds a public hearing in the Section 301 investigations concerning manufacturing overcapacity.

May 10: Commerce Department to send the President its findings on its Section 232 investigation into wind turbines by this date.

May 11: Deadline to request to appear at ITC's public hearing in its investigation concerning China's state support and pricing practices in the biotechnology sector.

May 14-15: President Trump travels to Beijing to meet with Chinese President Xi.

May 17: The ITC holds a public hearing in the ITC's investigation concerning China's state support and pricing practices in the biotechnology sector.

May 30: Commerce Department to send the President its findings on its Section 232 investigations into robotics and industrial machinery and PPE, medical consumables, and medical equipment, including devices by this date.

June 26: President to announce any actions on Section 232 investigations into drones and polysilicon and derivative products, as well as unmanned aircraft systems and their parts and components.

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