



St. Louis factories anxiously await for Trump steel tariff

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The United States Steel Corp.'s Granite City Works have been sitting idle for the last 18-months as laid-off workers are pinning their hopes on Donald Trump's new tariff restrictions for imported steel, which is currently running Americans out of business. However, just across the Mississippi River, other steel manufacturers worry that these new tariffs and curbs will raise their costs and make it harder to compete with foreign rivals. The inherent and apparent conflict is at the heart of the debate inside the administration that lobbyists and lawmakers say could delay or weaken any protections recommended by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The reviews findings, which were originally expected by the end of June, could be unveiled at any time in the coming weeks. For decades, since the end of the Cold War, American companies competing against China, which is flooding the world steel market with access production, have been unable to meet the mark. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics data compiled by the libertarian Cato Institute, steel mills and the steel production factories that now employ more than 140,000 people, compared to the 6.5 million steel-reliant manufacturers ranging from autos and appliances to machinery. There's a lot of room for American steel facilities to step up and supply these companies.

In Granite City today, where about 1,200 of the U.S. Steel plant's 1,800 workers remain laid off despite the recent restart of some rolling mill operations, the feeling is one of optimistic anticipation for a brighter future. "We're waiting on the 232 to get us back to work," said Chris Bragg, who was laid off in November 2015 when steel imports surged and oil prices cratered. The result was a slashing demand for the mill's main product, hot-rolled steel for oil and gas drill pipe. Since then, Bragg has been working in construction from home, hopeful for a brighter future.