

Trade

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for about 60 percent of their overseas sales. These tariffs make U.S. soybeans prohibitively expensive in China. That means lost sales for American farmers.

Separately Trump has enraged U.S. allies like Canada and the European Union by declaring their steel and aluminum a threat to America's national security as justification for slapping taxes on them.

On yet another trade front, the president would raise the stakes considerably if he carries out a threat to tax \$340 billion in imported cars, trucks and auto parts — action that would raise prices for vehicles Americans buy.

What's more, Trump has threatened to kick Canada out of a North American trade bloc if it doesn't cave in to pressure to open its dairy market, among other things.

Trump is running into resistance in pockets across the country. American farmers who rely on exports are facing retaliation from U.S.

trading partners, which depresses export sales and prices of agricultural commodities. Manufacturers that buy steel and aluminum are being hurt by higher prices and supply shortages resulting from the tariffs on imported metals.

Corporations fear that Trump's drive to rewrite the North American Free Trade Agreement will disrupt the supply chains that they've spent the past 24 years building across the United States, Canada and Mexico. If the trade war with China further escalates, consumers would face higher prices at the mall and online.

On the basis of public opinion surveys, at least, the president's approach poses political risks. A poll released Aug. 24 by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that 61 percent of Americans disapproved of the president's handling of trade negotiations.

"The Trump administration has handed Democrats in the midterms at least a talking point, not just with farmers but with consumers," said Mickey Kantor, the top American trade negotiator under President Bill

Clinton and now a partner at the Mayer Brown law firm.

Missouri's embattled Democratic senator, Claire McCaskill, is trying to link her Republican challenger, Trump ally Josh Hawley, to a nail manufacturing plant that says it might have to close because the Trump steel tariffs have driven up its costs.

Likewise in North Dakota, Democratic Sen. Heidi Heitkamp is running ads tying her Republican challenger, Rep. Kevin Cramer, to Trump's "reckless trade war."

Besides unveiling \$12 billion in aid to farmers hurt by the conflicts, Trump is seeking to reach trade deals to show that his brass-knuckles approach will succeed in the end. He has said he expects to sign a deal with South Korea later this month during the United Nations General Assembly. Earlier this month, he announced an agreement with Mexico to replace NAFTA — a move intended to pressure Canada to embrace a new North American accord on terms favorable to the United States.

Plans are underway for a delegation from China



In this July 24, 2018, file photo a barn with a banner reading "Trump" is seen behind a field of soy beans in Ashland, Neb. The U.S. and China have imposed import taxes on \$50 billion worth of each other's products.

to resume trade discussions with the Trump team as early as this week. In addition, Trump says his team has started trade discussions with Japan and has received interest from India.

For the president, the bet is that America's trading partners will capitulate promptly to his demands, rather than delay negotiations in the hope that Democrats will take control of the House and possibly the Senate and leave the president in a weaker bargaining position.

"There is some pressure to get results," said Philip Levy, senior fellow

at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and a White House economist under President George W. Bush. "They need to do something where they can say, 'Hey, this different approach actually works.'"

Trump is also relying on the loyalty of his supporters in rural America. He has called farmers "patriots" who are willing to absorb economic pain in the short run to buy time for him to negotiate trade deals more advantageous to the United States.

Approval for Trump's performance is still running at 53 percent in

rural areas, compared with 39 percent overall, according to an NPR/Marist poll released last week. Even if they're worried about the trade disputes, many rural Americans support Trump's stands on social issues such as immigration — a sign that the president may have enough political leeway to drive forward with his hard line on trade.

"Trump," said chief global strategist Greg Valliere of Horizon Investments, "has a lot of Teflon in the farm belt."

AP Economics Writer Josh Boak contributed to this report.

**"We may have all come on different ships,
but we're in the same boat now."**

— Martin Luther King Jr.



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