

Toward a U.S.–Ireland Fair Trade & Talent Agreement

A Pro-Growth Alternative to Tariffs

A Policy Proposal from the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH)

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Why Tariffs Matter for the AOH and Irish American Businesses and Workers

The Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) has always stood for the interests of Irish American communities, businesses, and workers. The proposal to implement tariffs as an instrument of U.S. trade policy towards Ireland directly affects the livelihoods of thousands of Irish American small business owners and workers—and that is why we feel compelled to speak out and offer an alternative.

- Irish American small businesses—from pubs and restaurants to importers and specialty retailers—depend on open and fair trade with Ireland.
- Tariffs on Irish goods would devastate these small businesses, many of which are already under severe economic strain, increasing consumer prices and putting American jobs at risk.
- Tariffs punish success. Competing—and winning—has always been the American way. The U.S. should focus on policies that grow jobs and deepen ties with allies like Ireland.

Trade policy is not about abstract economic theory; it is about real businesses, real jobs, and real families.

The AOH believes that its Fair Trade & Talent Agreement provides a smarter, pro-business alternative to tariffs on Irish goods, one that benefits all American workers, businesses, and communities.

Acknowledging the Trade Imbalance – And Its True Cause

The United States has a goods trade deficit with Ireland, primarily due to U.S. businesses shifting operations overseas to take advantage of Ireland's pro-business environment, lower corporate tax rates, and EU market access. This imbalance is not the result of unfair practices but rather Ireland's implementation of strategic economic policies. Even President Donald Trump acknowledged this in his recent conversation with Taoiseach Michael Martin:

"I have great respect for Ireland and what they did, and they should have done just what they did. But the United States shouldn't have let it happen."

— President Donald J. Trump (AP News)

Tariffs are, by definition, blunt, punitive tools. The imposition of tariffs seems inappropriate when, as a prior successful business leader, the President acknowledges Ireland "should have done just what they did." Tariffs do not solve the problem of the flawed U.S. tax and trade policy that the President, to his credit, acknowledges as the root cause of the trade imbalance. Tariffs only disrupt trade, hurt small businesses, and raise consumer costs.

Rather than using tariffs to force businesses to relocate, we should strive to make the U.S. the best place in the world to do business.

A Note on Tariffs and Ireland's Position Within the EU

The AOH recognizes that as a member of the European Union, Ireland does not control its own tariff regime, which is governed at the EU level.

However, we believe that U.S. policymakers can and should consider Ireland's unique standing as the United States' most culturally aligned and economically integrated partner within the EU. At a time of shifting global dynamics, Ireland remains a bridge between America and Europe—a country with deep people-to-people ties, shared democratic values, and a long-standing transatlantic business relationship.

While Ireland cannot negotiate independent trade agreements, it can and has supported bilateral workforce and investment initiatives. These are precisely the tools this proposal focuses on—concrete, cooperative actions that lie well within existing frameworks.

A one-size-fits-all tariff approach by the U.S. risks unintended harm to this relationship, particularly for the Irish American businesses and workers who have long served as the connective tissue in that partnership.

Expanding U.S.-Ireland Economic Growth Without Disrupting American Business

Rather than forcing businesses to choose between operating in Ireland or the U.S., we should create an integrated transatlantic business model that strengthens economic ties while increasing U.S. jobs.

A strong U.S.-Ireland economic partnership will:

- ✓ Encourage Irish companies to expand operations in the U.S., creating American jobs.
- ✓ Attract U.S. firms to reinvest in America without disrupting their Irish operations.
- ✓ Build a seamless transatlantic business ecosystem that fosters growth for both nations.

This is not a zero-sum game—it's about growing the pie instead of fighting over the slices.

A Fair Trade & Talent Agreement: A Pro-Growth Alternative to Tariffs

A. Business Expansion & Investment Incentives

1. U.S.-Ireland Investment Growth Fund

- ✓ Establish a U.S.-Ireland Economic Growth Fund to support cross-border investment in biotech, pharmaceuticals, and advanced manufacturing—ensuring that U.S. and Irish firms can expand together, not relocate apart.

2. Tax & Regulatory Coordination

- ✓ Align investment policies between the U.S. and Ireland to remove unnecessary barriers and improve business efficiency. While Ireland's lower corporate tax rate (12.5%) has attracted U.S. companies, the U.S. can compete more effectively by creating targeted tax incentives that encourage businesses to expand operations domestically.

3. Strengthening Transatlantic Supply Chains

- ✓ Encourage U.S.-based manufacturing expansion while integrating with Irish R&D and European distribution networks.
- ✓ Strengthen logistics partnerships to improve efficiency for U.S. and Irish businesses.

This approach helps bring jobs back to the U.S. while not disrupting U.S. business and maintaining strong ties with Ireland.

B. A U.S.–Ireland Professional Visa Pathway to Support Industry Growth

To strengthen transatlantic business ties and support U.S. industry reinvestment, the United States and Ireland should create a **reciprocal professional visa program**—a bilateral agreement that facilitates the movement of skilled personnel between both countries.

This program would:

- **Enable U.S. businesses to expand at home** by leveraging experienced Irish staff who are already integrated into their global operations—accelerating ramp-up and improving continuity.
- **Help Irish businesses grow in the U.S.** by allowing essential personnel to establish and scale operations efficiently.
- **Promote long-term collaboration** between U.S. and Irish firms through streamlined, trusted workforce mobility.

This is a practical step to enhance competitiveness and support growth in both countries.

Irish Reciprocity: A Two-Way Partnership

To ensure balanced benefits, the Irish government should offer:

- ✓ Visa pathways for U.S. professionals in key sectors
- ✓ Programs that encourage Irish American business collaboration
- ✓ Bilateral agreements that support workforce mobility and deepen economic ties

A targeted, reciprocal visa framework will strengthen the U.S.–Ireland business relationship and make reinvestment and reshoring in America easier, faster, and more productive.

4. Policy Recommendations: AOH's Call to Action

The Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) urges U.S. policymakers to support:

- ✓ Joint U.S.–Ireland investment incentives to encourage businesses to expand in the U.S.
- ✓ Corporate tax structures that make it attractive for U.S. firms to reinvest in U.S. operations.
- ✓ Creation of a reciprocal U.S.–Ireland professional visa program to facilitate talent mobility and business growth.
- ✓ Irish reciprocity measures to enable U.S. professionals to work in Ireland, strengthening bilateral business ties.

Rather than pulling businesses apart, the Fair Trade & Talent Agreement allows the U.S. and Ireland to grow together, ensuring a stronger transatlantic economy that benefits workers, businesses, and communities on both sides of the Atlantic.

5. Final Thought: A Smarter Path Forward

Trade wars often only lead to pyrrhic victories—we need innovative trade partnerships.

✓ Tariffs would cripple Irish American small businesses hurting the U.S. economy, disrupt key industries, and damage U.S.-Ireland economic ties.

✓ The Fair Trade & Talent Agreement provides a better way forward, making it easier for U.S. businesses to expand at home while preserving investment ties with Ireland.

✓ This is the best solution for American consumers, workers, businesses, and long-term economic growth.

A Fair Trade & Talent Agreement offers a smarter path—one that strengthens economic ties, supports American businesses, and honors the partnership that has defined U.S.-Ireland relations for generations. By working together, we can ensure the next chapter in this enduring relationship is one of mutual success, shared prosperity, and lasting friendship.

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