

# Entire political spectrum represented at rival rallies during Trump visit

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**SEE VIDEO FROM PRESIDENT TRUMP'S APPEARANCE BELOW:**

GRANITE CITY – People from across the political spectrum converged on Granite City Thursday afternoon to greet U.S. President Donald Trump who toured the U.S. Steel plant in the city to celebrate its reopening after tariffs on foreign steel imports increased to 21 percent.

Many of those assembled, including current workers at the steel plant, have differing views on those tariffs. Some were celebrating the president, saying he was able to restore a vital center of employment in Granite City while others said his policies had nothing to do with the plant's reopening, saying instead it was going to happen anyway, due to market values demanding it. Those in favor of the president lined the sidewalks leading to the plant along 19<sup>th</sup> Street Thursday, while those who were against him congregated at Civic Park on Niedringhausen around speakers and an inflatable, Trump-like chicken.

Steel workers from Granite City's U.S. Steel plant were among both crowds. Blast furnace operator Mike Dickinson said he was against Trump's policies. He held a sign stating “Tariffs are not worth my soul.” He said he is overall against Trump's policies, because he said they will cause a dismal future for his children.

“These tariffs are not worth all the negative policies of his administration,” he said. “I am against him because of his policies – especially those against the environment. A lot of people are short-sighted and only see these jobs coming back now, they don't see the future of the environment he's leaving for our children.”



Garland Horn, who said he worked at the mill for more than 43 years, said Trump's tariffs brought life back to the mill. He was joined by his daughter-in-law, Cindy Hall, who said she was joining Horn to celebrate how Trump's policies have worked to “make Granite City great again.”

“This plant has been in operation since 1895,” he said. “That first building still stands. Since it's been in operation, it has only closed down twice – once for six months in November 2008, and a second time for two years in 2015. Both times, guess who was in office. It wasn't a Republican, I can tell you that much.”

Dickinson said he had been out of work very little outside of the Nov. 2008 closing. He said he has been laid off during summer months, but worked through the winter to ensure the furnace was operating properly

Hall added to her father-in-law's sentiments, saying other countries have been illegally dumping steel on U.S. shores, saying Trump's leadership would send those ships carrying steel from places like China back to whence they came.



Robyne O'Mara of Action Metro East – a left-leaning political organization – said she was mad at the audacity of Trump taking credit for the reopening of the Granite City steel mill.

“This was planned well in advance of the tariffs,” she said. “This was going to reopen due to market needs, like it should be the whole time. This would have happened with or without those tariffs.”

O'Mara said Trump's tariffs have created more issues for Illinois farmers due to the responses from countries like China and Mexico, who were targeted by those tariffs. She said China's response is going to cost Illinois soybean farmers as much as \$1.7 billion in Illinois soybeans, adding that nation is also the second-largest buyer of Illinois pork.

Southern Montgomery County farmer Paula Shelton agreed with O'Mara. She said her buyer for soybeans has warned her to price her crops for future markets due to Trump's tariffs. She said Chinese imports of U.S. soybeans are a major part of the livelihood of American farmers. She said Trump's policies have lost her \$2 a bushel for soybeans and 65 cents a bushel for corn.



“Someone from the USDA said Trump is going to give us subsidies to make up for our losses, but we don't want that,” she said. “We don't want taxpayers to have to pay for us when we were doing just fine before the tariffs.”



She said the tariffs have also increased prices for farm implements. A new combine, which was already priced highly at \$300,000, is now about \$80,000 more expensive because of these tariffs, she said. A new combine was already out of her farm's price range, but she said it is increasing to astronomical levels.

Tariffs were not the only issues bringing people to Granite City Thursday, however. Sister Joan Anne Springman of Alton held a flag for pro-life. She said she protests for pro-life causes every chance she can get at the age of 84.

“Our president is pro-life,” she said. “I voted for him. I'm proud to have voted for him, and I will vote for him again. He has done tremendous things in our country, and I am thrilled to tell anyone and everyone who will listen about all the great things he has done for pro-life causes and religious freedom.”

Rayon Dansberry of Washington Park held a sign saying “Donald Trump can't even do a kick flip.” He said he represented the interests of Black Power Union. He said Trump has done nothing for black people, poor people, or anyone.

“He's coming here today, and he gets to give his speech and grin and take credit for all of this,” he said. “He's here today, and all these people are here today, but he'll be gone later, and he probably won't think of Granite City, Illinois ever again. And, things will be back to the way they were. Look at all these cops out here today. Where are they in East St. Louis when we're dying in the streets everyday? Where are they in Washington Park? What has Trump done for any of that? What has Trump done for us?”







Overall, the protests and counter protests were relatively peaceful. Some people from each side yelled across the street at each other, and police from multiple agencies were able to keep the peace – mostly by keeping people off the streets. Some people, however, were able to peacefully co-mingle on the sidewalk as the crowd awaited the motorcade's arrival (Trump was more than an hour and a half late).

St. Charles women, Catherine Butler and Debbie Mannahan, joined with Pamela Withers of Madison and Toya Smith of St. Louis. Each was holding a sign decrying the Trump administration while in the midst of a sea of Trump supporters, many of whom were in “Make America Great Again” hats.

“We've decided we're sisters united,” Butler said. The two pairs of women had not met before the entrance of Trump to Granite City.

When asked if they were hassled by Trump supporters, Withers said they were unmolested.

“We got a few side glances, though,” she said with a laugh.



Trump arrived in his motorcade around 3 p.m. He was scheduled to arrive around 1:30 p.m. The reason for the delay is not known at this time. He was greeted by both cheers and jeers as “Hail to the Chief” played loudly from speakers on the side of the street.

