The Virgin Islands Consortium

Trump Raises Global Tariffs to 15% After Supreme Court Strikes Down Prior Duties

After the Supreme Court ruled 6–3 that IEEPA does not authorize broad tariffs, President Trump imposed a new 10% import duty effective February 24 under a different trade law, later raising it to 15% and calling the justices “fools and lap dogs.”

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President Donald Trump has announced an increase in his newly proposed global tariffs from 10% to 15%, escalating his trade policy just one day after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down his prior import duties as unlawful.

The move follows a 6-3 Supreme Court decision issued Friday, which invalidated tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. In its ruling, the Court determined that IEEPA does not authorize the president to levy broad import taxes. Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for the majority, stated that while the statute allows for sanctions during national emergencies, it does not permit sweeping tariffs.

The decision represented a significant setback for Trump’s trade agenda. The original tariffs, enacted in 2025, imposed a 10% levy on nearly all imports, which the administration said was aimed at addressing trade deficits and drug trafficking. Those measures generated more than $160 billion in revenue. The ruling now opens the possibility of refunds exceeding $133 billion, with importers expected to file claims through U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Analysts estimate the refund process could take 12 to 18 months.

In response to the ruling, Trump signed an executive order Friday imposing a new 10% tariff on most global imports, effective February 24, 2026, under a different and rarely invoked trade law. Certain food products, critical minerals, and goods already subject to other tariffs are exempt. The White House described the measure as temporary and intended to address international payment imbalances.

By Saturday, Trump announced that the tariff rate would increase to 15%, citing the maximum permitted under the new legal authority. In a post on Truth Social, he confirmed the escalation. During a White House news conference, Trump criticized the Supreme Court justices as “fools and lap dogs” and said the administration would pursue additional tariffs through Commerce Department investigations.

The Supreme Court’s decision came in cases including Learning Resources, Inc. v. Trump, affirming some lower court rulings and vacating others. The majority opinion was joined by Chief Justice Roberts and Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan, Amy Coney Barrett, Neil Gorsuch, and Ketanji Brown Jackson. Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, and Brett Kavanaugh dissented, arguing that the law affords the president broader flexibility in responding to economic emergencies.

Economic projections suggest the invalidated tariffs would have generated approximately $1.2 trillion over a decade if maintained, while shrinking U.S. GDP by 0.3%. Analysts say the newly announced tariffs could produce similar revenue but remain subject to uncertainty, including the potential for further legal challenges.

Business groups welcomed the Court’s ruling as a reduction in trade barriers. Trump, however, called the decision “deeply disappointing” and described it as a “disaster for American workers.” The administration has indicated it will continue exploring alternative legal authorities to sustain its protectionist trade posture.

Financial markets reacted with mixed signals, as some sectors anticipated relief from potential refunds, while ongoing tariff threats contributed to continued volatility in global supply chains.