

Recent Instances of Business Interventions: Overreach or Lack of Legal Basis

Action, Details and Source

1. **Tariffs Against China:** Initiated tariffs on over \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods, which many argued exceeded his authority to regulate trade under existing law. Executive Order 13813, Trade Expansion Act of 1962
2. **Expansion of Domestic Manufacturing:** Issued calls to "Buy American" and pressured companies to move their operations back to the U.S., undermining existing contracts and supply chains. Various public statements and directives.
3. **COVID-19 Testing and Treatment:** Attempted to contract out COVID-19 testing and vaccine distribution to private companies without following standard procurement processes. Statements and actions during the COVID-19 pandemic response.
4. **Defense Contractor Controls:** Issued an executive order prohibiting stock buybacks and dividends for major defense contractors if they did not prioritize government contracts, interfering with corporate governance. Executive Order from January 7, 2026.
5. **Immigration Enforcement Actions:** Expanded the reach of ICE to businesses with immigrant employees, putting pressure on companies to comply with immigration enforcement without legal warrants. Various executive actions from 2017-2021.
6. **Banning TikTok and WeChat:** Sought to ban the apps in the U.S. over security concerns while pressuring companies to divest from their Chinese ownership structures. Executive Orders 13942 and 13943.
7. **Environmental Regulators:** Implemented controls over the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) operations, mandating that agency rules be reviewed by the White House, undermining their independence. Executive Order from early 2025.
8. **National Emergency Declarations:** Used national emergency powers to justify intervening in business dealings, particularly in the energy sector which led to discrimination against foreign investments. Executive Orders and declarations.

Additional Context and Implications

These actions often sparked legal debates about the appropriateness and legality of his executive authority. Critics frequently argued that Trump's approach to business regulations and executive power undermined established procedures and checks and balances designed to protect both consumers and businesses.

For example, while the use of tariffs does fall under the President's purview to regulate trade, the scale and method of implementation faced scrutiny regarding their adherence to constitutional limits. Similarly, the executive orders concerning defense contractors directly threatened corporate financial decisions without precedential support, leading to litigation and backlash from various stakeholders in the business community.