



AAEI

American Association
of Exporters & Importers

End of Year Report

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



When the Board of Governors convened to set our strategy for 2025, we established a clear directive: Amplify the AAEL Voice. We recognized that in an era of a new "America First Trade Policy" agenda and proposed "Liberation Day" tariffs, it was not enough for AAEL to simply monitor the policy changes—we sought to shape them.

Kari Finch
General Mills

I am proud to report that 2025 was a year of promises kept. We executed our ambitious goals to bring our members closer to policymakers and to modernize how we deliver education.

The centerpiece of this strategic shift was our inaugural Trade Matters Fly-In. For the first time, we moved beyond letters and comments, bringing the expertise of our members directly to Capitol Hill. This wasn't just an event; it was a statement that the trade community is a driving force of the American economy.

This momentum extended beyond Washington, empowering our community to engage in new ways. To further shape the trade narrative and equip our members for these policy shifts, we leveraged our digital platforms not just for news, but for strategic influence. We published monthly trade compliance webinars and grew our LinkedIn community by over 25%, turning our digital channels into a daily resource where thousands of professionals engage directly with the policy developments defining our industry.

We also heard your call for deeper connection. Following the 104th Annual Conference, we launched our new Trade Focus Committee meetings to provide more frequent opportunities for peer-to-peer collaboration. Every Thursday in July, September, and November, members gathered in open forums to share challenges and collaborate on real-time solutions. These sessions didn't just foster connection; they drove results, sparking new virtual programming, white papers, and critical public comments.

As we look toward 2026, our mission is clear: to advocate for practical and fair-trade policies, providing the certainty and transparency U.S. exporters and importers need to thrive in a connected global economy.

ADVOCACY

In 2025, AAEI's advocacy strategy focused on "Direct Engagement"—moving from reactive comments to proactive dialogue with decision-makers.

2025 Trade Matters Fly-In

AAEI executed a key strategic objective by hosting the inaugural Trade Matters Fly-In in Washington, D.C. This event bridged the gap between operational trade professionals and legislative policymakers.



Direct Impact: Members held high-level meetings with congressional offices to discuss the practical impacts of new tariffs and the America First Trade Policy agenda.



Agency Dialogue: Attendees received "off-the-record" briefings from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) leadership, providing critical foresight into enforcement trends.



Strategic Networking: The event concluded with a reception attended by foreign embassy officials and staff, strengthening our global partners.

Protecting North American Trade (USMCA)

With the United States-Mexico-Canada Free Trade Agreement (USMCA) review approaching, AAEI launched a comprehensive defense of the agreement's core tenets. AAEI submitted formal comments to the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) that prioritized:

- **Substantial Transformation:** We successfully argued for retaining this standard to protect manufacturing flexibility.
- **Duty Drawback Reform:** We pushed to eliminate drawback restrictions, advocating for a level playing field with Canadian and Mexican competitors.
- **Harmonization:** AAEI proposed a tri-national review team to finally resolve costly HTS classification discrepancies.

Export Reform



BIS "Affiliates Rule" (50% Rule):

Following the September 29, 2025 Interim Final Rule, AAEL provided critical guidance on the new "Red Flag 29," helping members implement screening for foreign entities with 50% or more ownership by listed parties.



Russian Sanctions:

We supported members in operationalizing new diversion controls to identify unauthorized transshipments through third-party countries added to the Entity List this year.

Supply Chain Resiliency



OSRA Implementation:

FAAEI actively monitored the Federal Maritime Commission's enforcement of the Ocean Shipping Reform Act, specifically advocating for fair demurrage and detention billing standards that keep the burden of proof on carriers rather than shippers.



China Port Fees:

We submitted comments to the USTR warning of the cost impact of new fees on Chinese-built vessels and successfully advocated for the suspension of these fees, which was announced on November 10, 2025.

Global Leadership & Strategic Alliances

Throughout the year, AAEI served as a rapid-response advocate during critical disruptions and global trade developments:



Tariff Actions

We provided immediate analysis on the "Liberation Day" tariffs and the suspension of de minimis exemptions, ensuring members could navigate the new "tariff stack".



Coalition Leadership

In December, we joined over 500 business organizations in a unified statement to protect the USMCA framework, amplifying our influence through partnership.



Global Engagement

AAEI expanded its international footprint by hosting foreign government meetings on the "America First Trade Policy" and strengthening our partnership with the Global Shippers Alliance (GSA) to address maritime service levels. Additionally, as a member of the World Customs Organization's (WCO) Private Sector Consultative Group (PSCG), AAEI championed private sector priorities in global customs modernization and data standardization efforts.

PROVIDING HIGH IMPACT LEARNING, ALL YEAR LONG



In November, we introduced a long-form virtual program “Cost Savings Opportunities for Proper Classification”, dedicating 3 hours to the foundations, applications, and enforcement of classification. This program was designed to address immediate compliance risks and highlight cost-saving opportunities for beginners and seasoned trade professionals alike.

In 2025, AAEI hosted 18 high-value webinars on a variety of key trade issues like tariff policy, hand carry and carnets, U.S. Trade Agreements, and the use of AI Tools for Trade Compliance.

Engagement

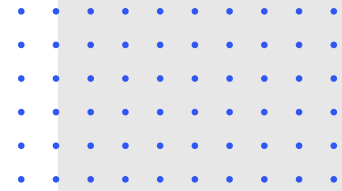
The Cost Savings Opportunities for Proper Classification program achieved a 98% attendance rate, proving the demand for a comprehensive, high-level training, led by experts across the trade policy and compliance landscape.

Accreditation

Securing credits from NCBFAA’s Education Institute ensured that AAEI education directly supports your professional development and recertification goals.

Keep up to date with all our virtual events at www.aaei.org/virtual-events.

Launching of AAEI's Trade Focus Committees



Following AAEI's 104th Annual Conference & Trade Day, it became apparent that members wanted more opportunities to connect with one another. In response to this request, every Thursday in July, September, and November AAEI members gathered in an open forum to share challenges, exchange resources, and collaborate on solutions to today's top trade compliance issues. This created an opportunity to connect across committees, contribute your expertise, and gain new insights from fellow members. Many of the topics discussed resulted in virtual programming, white papers, and public comment on policy.



Our specialized and topically-focused committees still met and will continue to on a bi-monthly cadence in 2026.



Trade Focus:
**Customs Policy
and Procedures**



Trade Focus:
**Drawback and
Duty Deferral**



Trade Focus:
**Export and
Global Trade
Compliance**



Trade Focus:
**Industry
Verticals**



Trade Focus:
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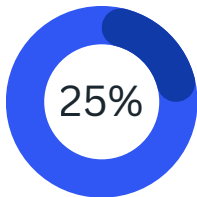


Trade Focus:
**Supply Chain
Resiliency**

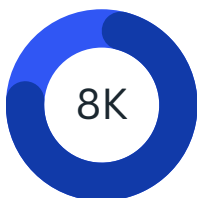
LINKEDIN GROWTH AND PERFORMANCE



AAEI continues to provide the trade community with valuable information, advocacy/policy updates, and upcoming events via our LinkedIn page.



AAEI welcomed 4.6K new followers, a growth rate of over 25%, bringing our total network to over 18K professionals.



Launched the *AAEI International TRADE Alert*, a weekly newsletter featuring industry insights and updates, authored by top trade professionals, reaching over 8K subscribers in its first year.



Solidified its position as a trusted, real-time source for trade intelligence with 8K page views and 3.5K unique visitors.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO



As 2025 comes to a close, I want to express my sincere gratitude for your support and engagement. This year reinforced the essential role that U.S. exporters, importers, and trade professionals play in keeping America businesses connected to global markets—a vital mission that welcomed 18 new member companies to our ranks this year and sets the stage for continued growth in 2026 driven by our strengthened value proposition and advocacy activities.

AAEI continued to advocate for clear, effective trade policies; provided timely compliance guidance; and strengthened our member community through Trade Focus Committee meetings, education and benchmarking. Your participation in our committees, events, and discussions helped shape our efforts and ensured that the voice of U.S. trade remains strong.

In 2026, AAEI will deepen its advocacy, expand its educational programs, and continue building platforms for members and American businesses to share expertise and navigate an evolving regulatory landscape. Together, we will stay ahead of emerging challenges and advance a secure, efficient, and competitive trade environment for U.S. businesses.

Thank you for your partnership and trust. I look forward to the work we will accomplish together in the year ahead.

Eugene Laney
President and CEO

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AAEI thanks our 2025 sponsors for their invaluable support. Together, we've created opportunities for education, innovation, and collaboration, shaping the future of international trade.

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