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VOS Selections leads legal fight against Trump-era tariffs impacting small importers

New York wine importer challenges constitutionality of trade measures as court reviews presidential authority over tariffs

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Vos Selections, a New York-based wine importer and supplier, has become a central figure in the legal battle against tariffs imposed by former President Donald Trump. The company, led by Victor Owen Schwartz, filed a lawsuit in April 2025 challenging the legality of these tariffs. Vos Selections has nearly four decades of experience importing

wines, spirits, and sakè from small producers around the world. The company's Italian portfolio includes well-known names such as Antica Hirpinia, Badia di Morrona, Fattoria di Petroio, and Ricci Curbastro.

The lawsuit was filed alongside other small businesses from different sectors, including FishUSA (fishing gear), Genova Pipe (plastic tubing), MicroKits (educational electronics), and Terry Precision Cycling (women's sportswear). All plaintiffs claim that the tariffs have severely impacted their operations. The case was brought forward with the support of the Liberty Justice Center, a Texas-based nonprofit law firm specializing in public interest litigation.

The controversy centers on whether Trump exceeded his presidential authority by imposing tariffs without Congressional approval. According to a recent ruling by the Federal Court of Appeals, Trump may have overstepped his powers by using tools that should be reserved for Congress. The court's decision temporarily invalidated most of the tariffs, but they were later provisionally reinstated pending further review.

Victor Owen Schwartz received news of the initial court victory while preparing dinner at home. At 66 years old, Schwartz is no stranger to risk. He left a career in banking to start Vos Selections 39 years ago and has grown the business from a two-person operation to a team of about 20 employees. The company supplies restaurants, independent liquor stores, and large chains like Total Wine. European wines make up the majority of its sales.

Schwartz says his decision to join the lawsuit was not political but based on business principles. He argues that the tariffs threaten not only his company but also the livelihoods of small farming families abroad and limit American consumers' access to authentic products. On its website, Vos Selections states its commitment to free markets and fair process, emphasizing that "radical tariffs threaten to dismantle that ecosystem."

The Liberty Justice Center initially struggled to find plaintiffs willing to challenge the administration due to concerns about political repercussions. Jeffrey Schwab, senior counsel at the Center and lead attorney for the case, said many business owners were hesitant to get involved. Eventually, five companies agreed to participate after being

contacted through blog posts and outreach efforts.

Ilya Somin, a constitutional law professor at George Mason University and co-counsel on the case, played a key role in assembling the group of plaintiffs. Somin had previously written about the unconstitutionality of the tariffs on his blog and was approached by lawyers seeking affected businesses.

Other plaintiffs in the case have also reported significant challenges due to the tariffs. David Levi, owner of MicroKits in Virginia, said he sources about 60% of his parts from China because they are either unavailable or much more expensive in the U.S. After the tariffs took effect, Levi reduced production and cut employee hours due to higher costs and supply shortages.

For Vos Selections, the financial impact has been substantial. The company has paid approximately $20,000 in new tariffs this year alone. Schwartz explained that importers must pay these duties when goods arrive in the U.S., not when they are sold, which puts additional strain on cash flow. As a result, Vos Selections has had to reduce purchases and take fewer risks with new or slower-selling products.

The outcome of this legal challenge remains uncertain as courts continue to review whether Trump’s actions were constitutional. For now, Vos Selections stands as one of the few private wine businesses openly fighting against these tariffs and advocating for small importers across industries who say they have been disproportionately harmed by trade policy changes.