

By Mike Walden: As the country recovers from the COVID-19 recession, numerous questions are being raised about the future course of the economy. One of them involves international trade. While international trade has been embraced in recent decades, questions are being asked about its relative benefits and costs. It may be time to have a new debate about trading with other countries.

In general, economists strongly support all forms of trade. Indeed, trade is a key - some may say, "the" key - part of the economy. Trade is based on the idea of specialization. Individuals have different talents and skills. If individuals specialize in what they do best, and then trade with others having different skills, then trading can make everyone better off.

When I was teaching introductory economics to undergraduates, here's the example I used. Assume Darius is a great cook, but knows nothing about fixing vehicles. Darius' neighbor, Leslie, has a father who is a mechanic, so she knows much about vehicle repair, but she never found cooking to be fun.

One day, Darius finds his car won't start. He could try to find the problem himself, but this would likely be a waste of his time. Darius remembers Leslie's skill with engines. He asks Leslie if she would look at his car, and in exchange, he'll cook her a fabulous meal. Leslie happily agrees. She quickly finds the problem with Darius' car is simply a loose connection. After making the repair, she sits down to a home-cooked meal of grilled chicken, twice-baked potatoes and salad covered by Darius' secret dressing.

What happened here was both Darius and Leslie used their expertise in cooking and car repair to trade services. They're both better off as a result.

Specialization and trade are pervasive in our economy and - economists argue - these concepts allow us to get the most from our resources, which leads to a higher standard of living. Specialization and trading can also be used to explain international trade. If Country A can make trucks cheaper than Country B, but Country B can make clothing less costly than Country A, then there's a natural motivation for A to trade trucks to B in exchange for clothing. Both get trucks and clothing, but at a cheaper cost than if each produced trucks and clothing on their own.

When I was in college fifty years ago studying economics, this was the view of international trade. It was viewed as simply an extension of domestic trade between people and companies. International trade, like domestic trade, allowed the economic pie to grow larger. As a result, over the last quarter century, the U.S. has entered several agreements that fostered free and unfettered international trade. Two important ones for North Carolina were NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and an agreement to allow China to join the World Trade Organization.

Proponents said these agreements would lower costs to consumers, and studies show they did. But studies reveal there were also significant job losses in many manufacturing sectors, including in North Carolina. Textiles, apparel and furniture - industries that propelled North Carolina throughout much of the 20th century - were devastated as foreign producers with much lower costs undercut them on price. Many workers who were released had to take jobs in lower-paying service sectors. Middle-income jobs shrunk while higher-income and lower-income jobs grew. The result was widening income inequality. Federal programs were established to help displaced workers, but they weren't enough to prevent many workers, households and communities from falling behind.

There's another worry about international trade, particularly with China. China is now our largest trading partner for products. However, China sells \$300 billion more each year in products to us than we sell to them. Some worry this trade surplus is helping China develop its military and espionage capabilities that could be used against our country and our allies. The conclusion is there are significant socioeconomic and political implications to international trade that make the simplistic view I was taught 50 years ago outdated. Does this mean we should reduce foreign trade and rebuild the industries we have lost, even if it means we may pay more for products? You decide. Walden is a Reynolds Distinguished Professor Emeritus at North Carolina State University.

FEBRUARY 16 - 18

Women of Fire

At Johnson Chapel Holiness Church, 7:30pm nightly. Wed-Pastor Sylvia McLendon, Thu-Pastor Donna McNair, Fri-Pastor Joletha Dockery. All are invited. CDC guidelines followed.

FEBRUARY 20 - 23

Spring Revival

With Pastor Ron Lynch, 6:30pm each evening at Harmony Community Church, located at 1984 Pulpwood Yard Rd in Peachland. 704-272-7410

ONGOING

Bible Study

At Thomas Chapel AME Zion every Wednesday, 7pm

Events

MARCH 8

Play Auditions

For Ansonia Play *Alice in Wonderland: Down the Rabbit Hole*, 6pm. Be prepared to read from the script. 112 S. Rutherford St in uptown Wadesboro. Info 704-694-4950. ansoniateatre.com

MARCH 17

Senior Shenanigans

Drive-Thru at Grace Senior Center parking lot, 11am-1pm celebrating National Nutrition Month. The fun includes trivia, games, door prizes & goodie bags. Everyone 55 & older is invited. Please wear a mask & remain in your vehicle. Located at 199 Highway 742 South in Wadesboro, just past IGA. 704-694-6616

MARCH 26

Vaccination Clinic

Free for dogs & cats, 9am-12 noon at the Anson Animal Shelter. Free microchips will be available (2 per household - \$5 for additional chips). Info & questions call 704-994-2738 or email mlett@ansoncountync.gov.

ONGOING EVENTS

Writers' Club Meets

Fourth Sunday each month at First Presbyterian Church in Wadesboro, 3pm (except July & Dec). Open to public, new members of all ages invited. Info 704-694-5211 or sandybruney@gmail.com

Free Pregnancy Test

And Ultrasound. Call HOPE Pregnancy Resource Center to schedule 704-690-6689

After School Program

Kid Cafe Mon-Fri from 2:30-5:30p.m. at the Burnsville Recreation & Learning Center, 704-826-8737

Lions Club Welcomes

New Members The Wadesboro Lions Club meets at Papa Joes Restaurant the 2nd & 4th Thursday each month at 6:30pm For more info or to purchase a broom please call Jim Chandler 910-571-1448

Senior Box

Program at Feed My Lambs starts the third Tuesday each month for seniors only. Located at 2290 Hwy 74 West, Wadesboro. 704-695-1820

Food Pantry

Free food every Wed, 9-11am at Burnsville Recreation & Learning Ctr. 704-826-8182

Free Food Distributed by Anson Crisis Ministries

Every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday, 8am-1pm. It is located at 117 North Rutherford Street in uptown Wadesboro. Telephone is 704-694-2445

Free Food

Distribution at Feed My Lambs every Tuesday, Thursday & Friday, 1-4pm. Located at 2290 Hwy 74 West, Wadesboro. 704-695-1820

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**COMING MONDAY
FEBRUARY 21ST**

Dressy and Casual Styles

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126 West Wade Street in Wadesboro
Corner of Wade & Rutherford Streets
Mon-Sat 10am-6pm 704-695-9161

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AUCTION EQUIPMENT AUCTION

Saturday, February 19 10am
Highway 145 South of Morven
Near the NC/SC state line going towards Chesterfield
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Your Tax Refund Can Support Endangered Wildlife in North Carolina

Officials with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission request that anyone filing a 2021 North Carolina state tax return consider donating a portion of their refund to the N.C. Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Fund (www.ncwildlife.org/Conserving/Programs/Wildlife-Diversity-Program). Contributions will support research and conservation management projects for the state's most vulnerable wildlife populations.

"The tax-check off program is the most significant source of non-federal funding for projects that support our state's nongame and endangered wildlife species," said Sara Schweitzer, assistant chief of the Commission's Wildlife Management Division. "Sea turtles, freshwater mussels, salamanders and other wildlife species without a designated hunting and fishing season all benefit. The funding benefits game species too because they often live in the same habitats."

Taxpayers can participate by checking line 30 on their North Carolina state income tax form, or by telling their tax preparer they would like to donate. If using tax preparation software like Turbo Tax, e-filers simply enter the amount they'd like to contribute to the N.C. Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Fund when prompted.

"Any amount goes a long way toward outreach activities and programs. When the Wildlife Commission can match grants using donations, it increases the dollars it can spend on programs.

For example, a \$100 tax refund donation results in an additional \$185 for wildlife diversity initiatives through grants," explained Schweitzer.

If you do not expect a refund but want to support nongame wildlife, direct donations can be made to the N.C. Wildlife Diversity Endowment Fund at www.ncwildlife.org/Donate.

Learn more about the agency's nongame and endangered wildlife projects and programs on the Commission's Wildlife Diversity Program reports webpage, www.ncwildlife.org/Conserving/Programs/Wildlife-Diversity-Program/WDP-Quarterly-Reports.

FREE Community Event

Movie Night
ON THE BIG SCREEN

Saturday, February 19th @ 6:00 pm

Location: City Reach Center
(*Harvest Ministries - Wadesboro)

FREE INDOOR EVENT

GREAT FOR FAMILIES, CHILDREN, AND THE COMMUNITY
*POPCORN, DRINKS, CANDY, JUICE, AND MORE
CONCESSION ITEMS WILL BE AVAILABLE

MOVIE: SPACE JAM 2

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL : 910-707-9697 OR 704-695-2879

