

President Trump ^{TIME} Talks 'America First,' But Sherrod Brown Wears It



Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) speaks at a campaign rally for Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton on June 13, 2016 in Cleveland, Ohio. Here, he's seen wearing his iconic canary in a cage lapel pin, which was given to him by Ohio steelworkers at a Workers' Memorial Day event in the 1990s. Angelo Merendino—Getty Images

BY ABBY VESOULIS JULY 11, 2018

President Donald Trump talks a lot about his “America First” policies. As president, he’s called for boycotts of companies that send production overseas, **imposed tariffs** intended to protect American manufacturers and launched a trade war with China.

But when it comes time to get dressed, the president has long **avored Italian suits.**

For Sen. Sherrod Brown, who shares Trump's **skepticism of free trade deals**, a similar commitment to American manufacturing begins with the clothes he wears every day.

The Ohio Democrat buys all of his suits from the Keystone Tailored Manufacturing **plant** located about ten miles away from his Cleveland-area home. The factory sews and assembles suits for seven different lines, including Hart Schaffner Marx, Brown's favorite brand.

Twice, he's helped in negotiations that kept the Brooklyn, Ohio, factory afloat amid concerns of shrinking profit margins and broader trends to outsource manufacturing to countries where labor is cheaper. The most recent **deal**, from which W. Diamond Group purchased the facility to continue producing American-made suits, saved the jobs of more than 160 workers.

"One of the real joys of this job was the day I walked into the plant where I have had a real role in keeping these people employed," Brown said in a recent interview with TIME.

It's not just clothes, either. Brown's family cars and even the lapel pin he wears on his union-made suits are also from Ohio.

Brown told TIME that he thinks that politicians who have platforms committed to buy-American policies, such as the president, should also walk the walk when it comes down to their own clothes.

Although he is a liberal Democrat who **differs from Trump on a**

number of issues, Brown has long held similar views about protecting domestic manufacturing. He has introduced **bipartisan legislation** to apply buy-America rules to all taxpayer-funded infrastructure projects. He's also reintroduced the **All-American Flag Act**, which requires the federal government only buy flags that are American-made. As of yet, the federal government is only required to purchase flags made from 50% American-made materials.

His commitment to purchasing American-made goods and apparel is not easy in today's global marketplace. Even though his suits are sewn in Ohio, the fabric and thread can be sourced from other countries. And while Brown and his wife both drive Jeep Cherokees assembled in Toledo, Ohio, not all of the vehicles' **parts** are.

For Brown to be so committed to buying-American, he has to be meticulous about his purchases. Politicians have the additional pressure of not dressing too fancy, which could cause negative media attention, said Lauren Rothman, the author of "Style Bible" and a fashion consultant for public figures.

"More than anything, what I see are people who say 'I don't want to be showy, I don't want to look like fashion is more important than politics,'" Rothman said. She called Brown's choices "absolutely intentional."

It is unclear what labels Trump wears now that he's secured the White House, but in the past, he's favored Brioni, an Italian brand whose cheapest sets ring in at well over \$4,000. To be fair, the president has also worn American-made pieces. Former Trump

spokeswoman Hope Hicks told the *New York Times* the president likes Brooklyn-made Martin Greenfield pieces. The New York suit-maker sells sets for around \$1,300 on his website.

On numerous occasions, Trump has called for more products to be manufactured in the states.

“When we purchase products made in the U.S.A., the profits stay here, the revenue stays here and the jobs — maybe most importantly of all — they stay right here in the U.S.,” Trump **said** at a showcase for American-made products in July of 2017.

Moreover, Trump has criticized other companies for moving manufacturing processes abroad, even when the brands sell to a customer base that cannot afford American-made premiums.

During his campaign, Trump **boycotted Oreos** after its parent brand, Nabisco, announced it would move some of its manufacturing to Mexico. More recently, Trump **insulted** Harley-Davidson as weak after it announced plans to move portions of its manufacturing abroad in light of high retaliatory tariffs imposed by the European Union in response to **Trump’s steel and aluminum tariffs**, which **Brown backs**.

But Trump doesn’t always follow suit in his business endeavors.

A substantial portion of the products he and his daughter, Ivanka Trump, sell under their clothing lines are made overseas, often making pit stops in as many as 12 countries along the way, according to analyses done by the *New York Times* and the

Washington Post.

When pressed on the discrepancy between his “America First” policies and his own company’s manufacturing in 2016, Trump told ABC News that it’s impossible to find the necessary materials in the United States.

“They don’t even make this stuff here,” he **said** in the interview.

Brown vehemently disagrees.

Trump “lied about that,” he said.

“His family continues to make a lot of money off of outsourcing jobs,” he said, citing several manufacturers in his home state that make goods similar to the ones sold in Trump’s **clothing** and **home decor** lines. “I can take the president or his family to Hart Schaffner Marx in Brooklyn. I can take them to an Ohio tableware company, I can take him to a glassware company in Toledo,” he said.

Brown acknowledged made-in-America products, such as suits, sometimes require higher labor costs than goods produced in other countries, but ultimately those costs “would support American workers,” he said.

Brown’s Ohio-made brand of choice, which sells sets starting near \$350, are more expensive than the \$100 ones donning Donald Trump’s label on **Amazon**, but he said that’s OK.

“It costs a little more, because I want to pay people a living wage,”
he said.

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