

Government Purchasing Bill to Boost Manufacturing with Good Working Conditions

Would End Tax Dollars for Sweatshops

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Contact:

Bjorn Claeson, SweatFree Communities, (207) 262-7277
Tim Schlittner, Office of Congressman Phil Hare, (202) 225-5905

Washington, D.C.— Yesterday Congressman Phil Hare (IL-17) and Mike Michaud (ME-2), along with co-sponsors Bob Filner (CA-51), Raul Grijalva (AZ-7), Alcee Hastings (FL-23), Marcy Kaptur (OH-9), and Gwen Moore (WI-4) introduced H.R. 6262, the Jobs Trough Procurement Act. The legislation seeks to tap the enormous purchasing power of the federal government to create manufacturing jobs in the United States and ensure decent working conditions for all workers who make products for the government.

“Allowing domestic sourcing requirement loopholes to be exploited and standing by while U.S. government products are made under sweatshop conditions is deplorable and we cannot tolerate it any longer,” said Congressman Phil Hare (D-IL). “This legislation has the ability to create and keep jobs here at home, help restore the manufacturing base across this country, and create a more fair global economy.”

The United States Government spends over \$500 billion on goods and services annually, including about \$4 billion on clothing and related materials. . These tax dollars support millions of jobs both in the United States and overseas. But, those jobs often provide substandard wages and poor working conditions. Many are sweatshop jobs.

“We hope that this bill will provide more jobs and more opportunities,” said Mary Luz Aliseo, a seamstress at Sam Bonk in New York City. “The government should not be spending money supporting sweatshops.”

“I worry about what will happen if our government allows just anybody to make military uniforms. That is why I hope Congress passes this bill,” said Wilheminia Richardson, who has worked at American Apparel in Selma, Alabama for 21 years. “Our government should take the lead in promoting US jobs with good pay and benefits.”

The Jobs Through Procurement Act will require contractors to adopt a standard for decent working conditions based on the International Labor Organization’s Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and to certify the names and locations of the factories to be used

in supplying the government. Contracting officials and contractors that procure manufactured goods with government funds will be trained on domestic purchasing requirements, and domestic purchasing clauses will be inserted in all applicable contracts and subcontracts, including service contracts.

“Demanding that federal contractors comply with core labor standards will redirect dollars already budgeted by the federal government towards small, labor intensive businesses, leveraging those expenditures into job creation and the rebuilding of our industrial infrastructure,” said Mitch Cahn, President of Unionwear.

Supporters of the bill also noted that the bill will help to reign in corporate excesses and confront a moral issue that can help unite an increasingly divided nation.

“The Jobs through Procurement Act taps the federal government’s purchasing power to hold corporations accountable to the American people,” said Bama Athreya, Executive Director of the International Labor Rights Forum. “Ending tax dollars for sweatshops is the right thing to do morally and it’s the right prescription for our economy.”

“I hope that our elected officials from both parties agree that it is unconscionable for taxpayer dollars to fund sweatshop labor,” said Bruce Raynor, President of Workers United, SEIU.

"The Presbyterian Church (USA) has called on all Presbyterians to practice responsible purchasing in our own lives, and the Jobs through Procurement Act will help our government to do the same. We wholeheartedly support this legislation which reflects the values of Christians and all faiths," said Grayde Parsons, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

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The Jobs Through Procurement Act is supported by the AFL-CIO, the American Federation of Government Employees, Change to Win, International Labor Rights Forum, Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Public Witness, SweatFree Communities, Workers United/SEIU, and others. www.jobsact.org

SweatFree Communities, a campaign of the International Labor Rights Forum, coordinates a national network of grassroots campaigns that promote humane working conditions in apparel and other global industries by working with both public and religious institutions to use institutional purchasing as a lever for worker justice. www.sweatfree.org