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Wisconsin joins the Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium

The SweatFree Wisconsin Campaign won a major victory last week when the State of Wisconsin became the ninth member of the Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium. The State now is developing a sweatfree procurement policy based on Consortium principles. Congratulations to the coalition, which has involved local labor unions, faith-based groups, immigrant rights groups, students, and others, and a special thanks to the Wisconsin Fair Trade Coalition for coordinating the statewide effort. Learn more about the SweatFree Wisconsin Campaign at www.sweatfree.org/wi

As early as 2008, the State responded positively to SweatFree Communities' first report on labor violations in the global uniform industry. "The State of Wisconsin is committed to protecting the rights of workers who produce the products that we purchase," wrote the Secretary of Administration to the state's apparel vendors. "We... expect you will take all appropriate steps to work with your suppliers to ensure that any labor rights and human rights violations are corrected and conditions for workers are improved." We are pleased to continue working with Wisconsin towards this goal.

With Wisconsin, four states and nine government agencies in total have joined the Consortium. Let's make your city, county, or state number 10! Visit the [Consortium website](#) for more information.

New SweatFree Sustainer program needs YOU

You support the mission of the sweatfree movement. You organize in your community. **Can you pitch in \$15 or \$10 a month to ensure that SFC has the resources to make an even bigger impact in 2010?** Our new Sweatfree Sustainer program needs YOU today. **Please sign up to make a small monthly gift today: www.justgive.org/nonprofits/donate.jsp?ein=13-4235462.** And stay tuned for an online ballot to vote for your Worker Rights Hero. Thank you to everyone who nominated her or his Hero to be the namesake of our new sustainer program.

SFC and the International Labor Rights Forum join forces

We are excited to announce to our community that SweatFree Communities and the [International Labor Rights Forum](#) have formed a new partnership. On February 15, the organizations signed a one-year integration agreement intended to increase support for local sweatfree campaigns and expand public awareness of and grassroots engagement with international labor rights. SFC will operate as a program of ILRF to help realize efficiencies in outreach, grassroots mobilization, fundraising, and administration. At the end of the contract year, a joint committee will evaluate the success of the integration against a series of benchmarks. Bama Athreya will remain the Executive Director of ILRF and Bjorn Claeson the Director of SFC. We hope you will join us in celebrating this new approach!

Take action: Urgent solidarity for Dole workers in the Philippines

[Take action now to demand justice for Dole Philippines workers.](#)

Thanks to the recent SFC-ILRF merger (outlined above), we now are better positioned to bring you first-hand news and alerts about related labor struggles around the globe. We hope you'll consider taking action on global labor rights struggles even as you organize locally on sweatfree campaigns. This urgent request comes from our allies in the Philippines who produce pineapples sold in U.S. grocery stores for the global brand Dole. Just two weeks ago ILRF staffer Brian Campbell sat down with unionized workers at Dole Philippines to learn more about how Dole has changed conditions on the plantation. We have learned that some of the workers that met with Brian may have been suspended or fired from their jobs within hours of meeting with him. [Send a letter to Dole now to demand justice for Dole workers in the Philippines.](#)

To learn more about the attacks on unions in the Philippines, please visit: www.laborrights.org/end-violence-against-trade-unions/philippines.

PASCA sparks Martin Luther King Day celebration in Bangladesh

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." Dr. Martin Luther King's prophetic words were the basis for reflection and action during a celebration hosted by the National Garment Worker Federation (NGWF) in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on January 20. About 100 garment workers were present at the event, which was co-organized by the Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance (PASCA), the International Workers of the World (IWW), and the NGWF.

According to a report from IWW volunteer Jonathan Christiansen, who spoke at the event, "Dr. King's message about the struggle for equality, justice and peace was received with great enthusiasm by the garment workers and organizers." Also present at the event was the Human Rights officer of the U.S. embassy who reportedly said that "the U.S. government and people of the United States are behind the garment workers' struggle for economic justice," a message met with "smiles and appreciation." At the end of the celebration workers shouted out their dreams as a NGWF organizer took them down on a poster board which read in both English and Bangla, "I have a dream."

Pittsfield, Mass. and Madison, Wisc. are on the move

Isn't it amazing how almost every month we report on a new city or state that has passed a sweatfree policy, or a new grassroots campaign that's been started? This month is no different. In May 2009, Sweatfree Communities and Manos Unidas, a multicultural immigrant rights and arts collective in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, organized a

screening of the documentary Made in L.A. **Following the screening, members of Manos Unidas were moved to take action and launched a campaign for Pittsfield to go sweatfree.** Two weeks ago they succeeded when the City Council unanimously voted in favor of the proposed [sweatfree procurement policy](#). The policy requires contractors supplying apparel to the city to disclose factory locations and ensure that factories pay non-poverty wages and respect employees' freedom of association. The City also intends to join the Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium. We applaud the City of Pittsfield, a former mill town where textile mills were replaced by paper mills and then the General Electric plant which closed in 1986, for taking action to protect the rights of workers everywhere. **Do you also want to ignite a campaign with a screening of Made in L.A.?** Contact us at organize@sweatfree.org!

And we've got to give it to Wisconsin sweatfree activists this month! In further Badger State news, the City of Madison has established a citizens' Committee on Sweatfree Purchases to provide ongoing evaluation and assistance to the City towards achieving the purpose of Madison's sweatfree ordinance. According to a [report in The Badger Herald](#), the committee "is looking to make Madison part of a larger consortium that would allow them better transparency and follow-through with regards to purchases from suppliers to the city." "It's very exciting that states are starting to establish a contractual link to a monitoring organization and that, at least in theory, cities like Madison could start using the monitoring consortium to ensure their purchasing is done ethically," committee member Jonathan Rosenblum said.

Winter Olympics: More than one race to the bottom

Have you been enjoying the Winter Olympics? While skiers and snowboarders race their way to the bottom of the slopes, unfortunately many Olympics sponsors are engaged in an uglier race to the bottom - using sweatshops. Check out this new video put together by our friends at the Play Fair campaign: www.youtube.com/watch?v=06Q2zeLXRfY

Sweatshop workers speak out... in your city?

Our 2010 "Sweatshop Workers Speak Out" speaking tour schedule is just about full, but two dates are still available. If you live in Wisconsin or Illinois and are interested in hosting the tour please email trina.tocco@ilrf.org or call 269-873-1000. Featuring three speakers from Bangladesh and Pakistan who will give firsthand accounts on what it is like to sew uniforms and stitch soccer balls sold to U.S. government agencies, the tour aims to build solidarity between U.S. communities and international workers. Each tour event will focus on action steps to initiate or strengthen local sweatfree organizing.

The speaking tour will take place in the second half of April 2010, beginning in Minneapolis, moving eastward, and ending in Washington, D.C., where the workers will meet with members of Congress to discuss federal sweatfree policies. The tour is sponsored by SweatFree Communities and the International Labor Rights Forum. For more information, please visit this website: www.laborrights.org/events/sweatshop-workers-speak-out-speaking-tour