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We are delighted to provide you with improved tools for staying connected to SweatFree Communities and taking action for workers' rights. We have just completed the transition of our database to a new online space and we appreciate your patience while we lagged behind in keeping up with monthly e-newsletters during the switch-over.

New Study: *Subsidizing Sweatshops*

In July, we released a new study, [Subsidizing Sweatshops: How tax dollars fund the race to the bottom](#). The report includes case studies of 12 factories in nine countries that produce public employee uniforms and other apparel for eight major uniform brands. It reveals severe human rights and labor violations throughout the uniform industry, including child labor; illegally low poverty wages; forced and unpaid overtime; verbal, physical, and sexual abuse; pregnancy testing, excessively long work hours causing physical ailments; disregard for freedom of speech or association; and elaborate schemes to deceive corporate auditors. Local sweatfree campaigns around the country released the report from their communities, resulting in over [30 distinct news stories](#).

Before releasing the report, we asked government purchasing officials to contact their vendors, urging them to respond constructively to the report by working to improve working conditions in supplier factories. At least five states (Maine, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin) and two cities (Austin and Los Angeles) took action. Wisconsin's letter to their vendors read: "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 encourage you to remain fully engaged with the factories and use whatever influence you have to improve conditions for affected workers."

Not surprisingly, as their business model relies on hiding the reality of worker exploitation in their supply chains, the companies responded to *Subsidizing Sweatshops* by denying labor violations. In turn, we compiled a [summary of the company responses along with our reply](#).

To order a hard-copy of *Subsidizing Sweatshops*, send \$5 to SweatFree Communities, 140 Pine St., Suite 10, Florence, MA 01062.


National SweatFree Summit

We held our fifth annual SweatFree Communities national gathering in mid-July, to coincide with the Centennial Meeting of the National Governors' Association in Philadelphia.




The highlight of the weekend was the Workers' Rights Board Hearing, "Sweatshops and State Purchasing Practices," a mock-hearing that we convened with Philadelphia Jobs with Justice. Local religious and community leaders heard testimony from international and domestic garment workers and issued a recommendation calling on all governors to join the Sweatfree Consortium. Governor Edward Rendell used the event to [announce that Pennsylvania is the first state to commit to the Sweatfree Consortium](#). Following the Hearing, we rallied in front of the governors' meeting, thanking Rendell and urging the support of other governors. [Here's a slideshow](#).

Presbyterian Church (USA) Passes Sweatfree Overture

 Thanks to the initiative of the Presbytery of Baltimore, a "Sweatfree Overture" passed with overwhelming support at the Presbyterian Church USA's General Assembly meeting in June. In the Overture, the Presbyterian Church USA endorsed the formation of the State and Local Government Sweatfree Consortium. The Church will "encourage congregations and presbyteries to actively lobby their respective state and local governments to join the Sweatfree Consortium." The Overture also encourages Presbyterian entities to adopt responsible purchasing policies and requests that all Presbyterians "practice responsible consumerism, beginning with simplicity and non-acquisition whenever possible and responsible purchasing, including sweatfree and ecologically sound products where purchase is necessary."

Midwest Launches New Sweatfree Campaigns

 On July 1, two new sweatfree campaigns were launched! Please give a warm welcome to the [SweatFree Michigan campaign](#) and the [SweatFree Ohio campaign](#). Both campaigns were launched along with the release of the report *Subsidizing Sweatshops*, and earned news coverage in the Detroit Free Press, the Columbus Dispatch, and other major media outlets. The SweatFree Michigan campaign launch included a rally at the State Capitol with dozens of activists from faith-based, student, labor, and community organizations around the state, as well as elected officials.

In Illinois, anti-sweatshop advocates gathered for a panel discussion at the International Academy of Design and Technology in Chicago, the fashion design school, to release and discuss *Subsidizing Sweatshops*. The event was covered by the Chicago Tribune, the Chicago Sun-Times, and Chicago Public Radio. Over in Wisconsin, Governor Doyle's administration took note of the report and contacted its apparel vendors. Governor Doyle also wrote a letter to the anti-sweatshop activists gathered in Philadelphia for the National SweatFree Summit and the National Rally to Stop Sweatshops, congratulating them for their leadership.

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