Lucas county to vote on historic Sweatshop-Free policy

Proactive policy would help ensure taxpayer dollars are not spent on sweatshop labor

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Lucas County Commissioner Ben Konop on Monday will be joined by local and national labor leaders, community religious leaders, and workers rights advocates to announce a proposed anti-sweatshop resolution governing purchases by Lucas County government. A rally in support of the resolution will take place Monday, June 2nd, at 2 P.M. on the steps of Government Center. The move comes as a statewide campaign is being prepared to make the entire state of Ohio end its tax dollar support of sweatshops.

â€œThe use of sweatshop labor is unacceptable in the 21st Century. Our community values human rights and workers rights and, as such, we should not be spending taxpayer dollars on businesses that rely on inhumane and unsafe labor practices to make a buck,â€ stated Commissioner Konop.

â€œWe applaud Lucas County commissioners for their commitment to end tax dollar support for sweatshops,â€ said Victoria Kaplan, Midwest Regional Organizer for SweatFree Communities. â€œWe look forward to Governor Strickland following Lucas Countyâ€™s lead to make our entire state sweatshop-free.â€

The proposed policy will be one of the most aggressive anti-sweatshop resolutions in Ohio and nationwide. Under the proposed policy, which will be voted on at Tuesday's Commissioners hearing, Lucas County will require contractors to certify that they are not using sweatshop labor in the manufacture of garments, uniforms, or related materials purchased with Lucas County taxpayer dollars.

The policy mandates that these contractors doing business with the county pay their workers at production facilities a living wage, adjusted by labor market; that they be afforded the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining; and be provided with safe working conditions and a non-discriminatory working environment.

The policy also includes a commitment for Lucas County to join a national Sweatfree Consortium of local and state governments opposed to spending taxpayer dollars on sweatshop labor. The national consortium, organized by SweatFree Communities, will pool purchasing power and create economies of scale, helping create a viable market for sweatfree manufacturing.
If this resolution is passed, Lucas County will be amongst the nation's leaders in this global human rights initiative, stated Konop. Simply stated, it's the right thing to do morally. Our community expects workers to be treated and compensated fairly and taxpayer dollars to be spent responsibly, concluded Konop.

SweatFree Communities coordinates a national network of grassroots campaigns that promote humane working conditions in apparel and other labor-intensive global industries by working with both public and religious institutions to adopt sweatshop-free purchasing policies. Using institutional purchasing as a lever for worker justice, the sweatfree movement empowers ordinary people to create a just global economy through local action. Learn more at www.sweatfree.org

The State and Local Government Sweatfree Consortium, comprised of states, cities, counties, local government agencies, and school districts, as well as human rights advocates and labor rights experts, will pool resources of public entities to investigate working conditions in factories that make uniforms and other products for public employees. Cities and states will hold vendors to the same standards, use the same independent monitor for enforcement, and create a market large enough to persuade companies to deal responsibly and ethically with their suppliers and workers. Learn more at www.sweatfree.org/sweatfreconsortium

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