

Governor Corzine Joins National Anti-Sweatshop Initiative

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Bjorn Claeson

Tel. 207-262-7277

September 13, 2006

Governors' Coalition Seeks End of Tax Subsidies of Sweatshops

New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine has announced that he will participate in a path-breaking governors' initiative to end sweatshop exploitation in apparel and other global industries. Proposed by Governor John Baldacci of Maine, the Governors' Coalition for Sweatfree Procurement and Workers' Rights will use state government procurement as a catalyst to level the playing field for ethical businesses and advance justice for sweatshop workers.

In 2002, Governor McGreevey issued an Executive Order for sweatfree state procurement to end taxpayer support for sweatshop abusers. The centerpiece of the law is a code of conduct requiring state contractors and subcontractors of apparel to adhere to basic international fair labor standards, including freedom of association and non-poverty wages.

"New Jersey has been engaged in sweat-free procurement for years, so it is important that they play an active role in this new Coalition," said Eric Dirnbach, Apparel Industry Coordinator of the union UNITE HERE. "By joining this organization, the State has further shown their commitment to workers' rights and will establish better procedures to ensure that they buy goods made under decent working conditions."

By acting together, states can increase resources for investigating sweatshop conditions and coordinate enforcement of sweatfree procurement policies.

"The Governor's Coalition for Sweatfree Procurement and Workers' Rights has the potential to create a hundred billion dollar market for products made in humane conditions, transforming hundreds of thousands of sweatshop jobs into good jobs," said Bjorn Claeson, Executive Director of SweatFree Communities, a national organization that coordinates the campaign for a State and Local Government Sweatfree Consortium.

In addition to New Jersey, the states of California, Illinois, Maine, New York, and Pennsylvania have adopted sweatfree procurement laws, along with over 60 cities, counties, and school districts. Popular support for sweatfree procurement is growing; in New Jersey both unions and businesses have endorsed Corzine's initiative.

Leslie Kretzu, co-founder of New Jersey based Educating for Justice, said: "When I give lectures on college and high school campuses about the issue of sweatshops operating in today's world,

students ask, 'Why haven't we fixed this problem yet? And why isn't our government doing something to stop these types of abuses once and for all?' By joining the Governor's sweatfree coalition, Governor Corzine has taken the initiative that all elected officials should be taking and I am proud that he has done so."

More information about the campaign for a State and Local Government Sweatfree Consortium is available at: <http://www.sweatfree.org/sweatfreeconsortium>