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Newsletter #21

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Economic Crisis, Buy American & Sweatfree Organizing

In light of the economic crisis, heightened awareness on the need to grow the domestic economy is spurring popular interest in "Buy American." How does this apply to the U.S. apparel industry, which has largely been outsourced? Of the jobs that remain, over 50% of the factories qualify as sweatshops and, of the 20,000 U.S. garment workers currently producing for the Department of Defense, many labor under subpar conditions. Recognizing this reality, and the fact that good jobs stimulate the economy much better than bad jobs, we encourage:

- Injecting "Buy Union" back into "Buy American" so that we're not replacing overseas sweatshops with U.S. sweatshops
- Implementing sweatfree government purchasing to support workers' human rights and labor rights everywhere so that our tax dollars don't accelerate the race to the bottom

For further thoughts on the topic, read and comment on Liana Foxvog's [article on our blog](#).

Pittsburgh Sweatfree Policy Forum

The Pittsburgh Anti Sweatshop Community Alliance and the Pennsylvania Fair Trade Coalition are hosting a meeting on sweatfree procurement for policy makers on Thursday, February 26 in Pittsburgh.

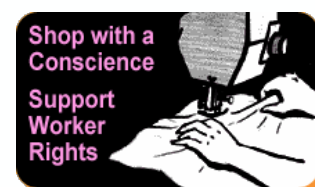
Economic Stimulus Worker Tour

Building a new economy that puts workers first

Workers from the U.S. and Latin America speak out against tax dollar support for sweatshops and for economic policies that lift all boats. Hear their stories and take action for positive change in 2009.

Speakers will include:

- Workers with experience in sweatshops



The meeting goal is to evaluate best-practices, share experiences, and develop a framework for collaboration to help implement sweatfree purchasing policies effectively. Several universities and public entities, including the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, are expected to participate. For more information, contact [Kenneth Miller](#) or [Amy McAuliffe](#).

- Local organizers fighting for better working conditions
- Experts on international policy

Host an event, attend an event, or [donate](#) to make the tour possible.

[More info...](#)

Plan a Tax Day Action

Building upon last summer's momentous publishing of [Subsidizing Sweatshops](#) - our report on labor abuses in the global garment industry - we are pleased to announce the release of a next edition. The new study follows the situation on the ground at several factories, documenting how conditions have progressed in eight months. In addition, we'll publicize our research on new cases. Chock-full of worker testimonies and photos, this report will help turn up the heat on public officials to support sweatshop-free laws and join the Sweatfree Consortium.



In July, we celebrated over thirty news hits when the report came out. Help us *double* that this year. **Our plan is to release the report with simultaneous actions in a dozen cities on April 15, and we need your help!** As the nation is thinking about taxes, as people turn in those last-minute returns, we'll publicly scrutinize how our taxes are spent, exposing the illegal and inhumane working conditions supported by our tax dollars.

For a sneak preview of a story from our report, [click here!](#)

Plan an event! Order an action planning kit: E-mail Liana at liana@sweatfree.org or call (413) 586-0974.

Olympia Joins Sweatfree Consortium

The City Council of Olympia, Washington, voted to join the [Sweatfree Consortium](#). This facilitates the implementation of a [Sweatfree Resolution passed by the City Council in 2004](#) establishing sweatfree purchasing for city products such as t-shirts, sweatshirts, and baseball caps.


The Sweatfree Campaign in Olympia was organized by the South Sound Clean Clothes Campaign (SSCCC). The Campaign is a coalition of Olympia, Tumwater, and Lacey students, union members, people of faith, and concerned citizens raising awareness about the sweatshop industry, and challenging individuals as well as public and private institutions to create positive change by altering their purchasing practices. Since 2000, SSCCC has been active in organizing numerous events such as an annual sweatshop film festival, press conferences, informational meetings and events. SSCCC will continue to work closely with the City Council as an information resource and to assist in guiding the Council as they work with the

Consortium.

Ashland Passes Sweatfree Resolution

A campaign led by Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice successfully won a Sweatfree Resolution in Ashland, Oregon. The resolution states, "The City does not wish to purchase goods and services that depend on sweatshop conditions that deprive people of their legal rights and dignity ... The City shall support the creation of the [State and Local Government Sweatfree Consortium](#) to collaborate with other public agencies to share information and cost of independent monitoring of working conditions in supplier factories. The City intends to become a member of this Consortium after it is created." City staff have six months to develop a sweatfree procurement policy.

Action in Michigan for Human Rights

On the 60th anniversary of International Human Rights Day,  activists delivered a thousand postcards to Governor Granholm, showing public support from across the state for an effective statewide sweatfree purchasing law. "It is important that our State is not part of the race to the bottom where goods are made in sweatshops for pennies at the high price of human misery," said Father Norm Thomas, pastor of Sacred Heart Church and member of the Detroit Interfaith Coalition, a speaker at the press conference.

[SweatFree Michigan](#) is a dynamic coalition of more than 20 Michigan faith, labor, student, human rights, and community organizations advocating for responsible purchasing policies at the state and local level.

Consortium on the Road to Approval in Milwaukee

Steve Watrous, organizer in Milwaukee, reports from the campaign: "The Milwaukee Clean Clothes Campaign has been quite active recently in trying to get our city to enforce its Ethical Purchasing ordinance. We have been stymied by lawless and lying corporations, and an understaffed purchasing department with little time and no money for enforcement.

"Joining the SweatFree Consortium and getting it off the ground will help the City of Milwaukee realize the goal of purchasing clothing not made in sweatshops. Ald. Tony Zielinski has sponsored a resolution authorizing the City to apply for membership in the Consortium and appropriating an initial \$700 for Consortium participation.

"Milwaukee activists have benefited from national SFC resources, including investigations of suppliers in China and Mexico, and support in a battle over a police uniform contract. The City is finally on the verge of chipping in for these efforts."