



A Network for Local Action Against Sweatshops

FAQ for Government Representatives

State and Local Government Sweatfree Consortium *Ending Tax Dollar Support for Sweatshops*

What is the State and Local Government Sweatfree Consortium?

The State and Local Government Sweatfree Consortium is a new collaborative effort of U.S. states, local governments, school districts, and human rights advocates to ensure that we do not spend tax dollars on uniforms and other products made in sweatshops. The Consortium will pool resources for investigations and monitoring of supplier factories and coordinate the implementation and enforcement of sweatfree standards to ensure compliance with codes of conduct established by states and localities. The Consortium will begin working in the apparel sector, and consider expanding its scope to other industries where sweatshops are of concern.

Why is the Consortium needed?

Over 180 states, cities, counties, and school districts in the United States have adopted sweatfree procurement policies, requiring vendors and supplier factories to abide by labor and human rights standards in return for public contracts to supply uniforms and other products. Policy enforcement has been the greatest challenge for these public entities. No single state, local government or school district has adequate resources to monitor and verify working conditions and enforce sweatfree standards at supplier factories beyond their immediate jurisdiction. But, because there is a large number of public entities committed to sweatfree procurement, it is now possible to pool resources to ensure code of conduct compliance.

What is the status of the Consortium?

It is in formation. On March 29, 2007, the Department of General Services of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hosted the convening meeting of the Consortium in Harrisburg. Participants included government representatives from four states (Maine, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York) and two cities (Los Angeles and San Francisco) as well as labor rights experts and human rights advocates. The Harrisburg meeting established key Consortium principles and created an interim Consortium Steering Committee to guide its development. The interim Steering Committee is now inviting public entities to become provisional members of the Consortium.

There's power in numbers. ... If we team up with other states we'll have even more influence in the global marketplace. Workers around the world deserve any influence or leverage we can bring to the table.

-- Governor John E. Baldacci, Maine

We have a moral obligation to ensure [the sweatshop] practice is not rewarded through state contracts and taxpayer dollars. ... By using our combined state procurement power, we can impart real change.

-- Governor Edward G. Rendell, Pennsylvania

The positive impact of each city's sweatfree policies is maximized by collaborating across jurisdictional boundaries. By consolidating our purchasing power and coordinating enforcement, our cities can better assure that anti-sweatshop policies achieve their intent.

-- Mayor Gavin Newsom, San Francisco

How can my state/county/city/town/school district join?

In order to become a provisional Consortium member the appropriate public official should sign a resolution, expressing support for the Consortium principles and designating a staff person as liaison to the Consortium. The resolution must include all the key principles included in the model resolution drafted by the interim Steering Committee. The introductory language in the model resolution may be changed, keeping in mind that from a legal standpoint, the purpose of the Consortium is ethical purchasing, not regulating or changing an industry. For legal guidance in drafting sweatfree resolutions, see the memorandum available at www.sweatfree.org/sweatfreeconsortium.

What is the cost of joining the Consortium?

There is no cost for being a provisional Consortium member. Annual consortium dues will be payable when the Consortium is operational. The dues will be determined by the interim Steering Committee in consultation with provisional Consortium members, and may be in the range of 1% of the procurement budget for the products whose supply chains are included in the Consortium's code of conduct compliance activities. The interim Steering Committee also encourages provisional members to financially support the outreach and educational effort to attract additional public entities to the Consortium. Such contributions should be made to SweatFree Communities, a non-profit 501(c)(3) non-governmental organization which coordinates the Consortium campaign.

How will the Consortium provide monitoring?

The Consortium will use a factory monitor to conduct primarily complaint-based investigations. This monitor must be independent; that is, it can be neither owned nor controlled by, or obtain revenue from, any vendor, manufacturer, contractor, or subcontractor. The monitor will work in partnership with organizations that are situated in the local factory community and have demonstrated commitment to the human rights and basic needs of workers. For additional information on the principles of the Consortium, check the Summary of the Consortium White Paper.

Who is involved and who is directing the Consortium effort?

The Consortium is both a grassroots campaign and a collaborative undertaking between government representatives and human rights advocates. Sweatfree campaigns across the country are building broad sweatfree coalitions, educating their communities, reaching out to public officials to gain their support for the Consortium, and sharing their experiences with other campaigns. Because the Consortium is still in formation, questions, issues, and solutions that arise in local communities help guide the overall effort. At the same time, five human rights advocates and government representatives from three states, two cities, and one school district have formed an interim Consortium Steering Committee, making provisional policy decisions and developing outreach goals and strategies. Government representatives are also discussing the Consortium at professional meetings and at meetings of elected officials.

Who should government representatives contact for more information?

Please contact the following interim Steering Committee representative:

- Bjorn Claeson, Executive Director, SweatFree Communities, 207-262-7277, bjorn@sweatfree.org

The materials referenced on this sheet are available at www.sweatfree.org/sweatfreeconsortium