



Campaign Updates

- Updates 2009
- Updates 2008
- Updates 2007
- Updates 2006
- Updates 2005
- Updates 2004
- Updates 2003
- Updates 2002

Sweatfree in the News

Media Releases

Sweatshop News

Newsletter

Statements

Events

- National Summit 2010
- Speaking Tour 2010
- National Summit 2009
- Speaking Tour 2009
- National Summit 2008
- Speaking Tour 2008
- Conf. Report 2007
- Conf. Report 2006
- Conf. Report 2005
- Youth Conf. 2005

Sweatshop Workers Call on Portland to Pass "Sweatfree" Bill

For Immediate Release
Contact: Deborah Schwartz

Monday, February 19, 2007
(503) 236-7916

Labor Leaders, Human Rights Groups and Others Rally Outside City Hall in Support of a Sweatfree Procurement Policy

Portland, OR — Sweatshop workers from India and Colombia spoke outside Portland City Hall today in support of a proposed "sweatfree" procurement policy that would ensure textiles and other products purchased by the city are produced under safe and humane working conditions. They were joined by local labor leaders, human rights advocates, city employees and others at a rally calling upon City Council to pass a sweatfree ordinance.

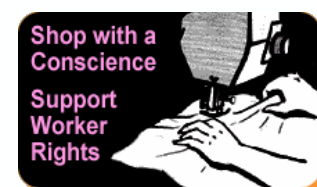
"I have worked in garment factories since I was a teenager," said Kotagarahalli Jayaram, a sweatshop garment worker from India now active with the Garment and Textile Workers' Union. "People work incredibly long hours under unsafe, exploitative conditions to make garments bound for the United States. City governments can help change those practices by enacting policies that create a greater market for sweatfree goods. Only when large purchasers like governments, universities and retailers assert themselves will on-the-ground working conditions improve."

"Sweatshop working conditions are something the Bureau of Labor and Industries was created to eradicate over 100 years ago," said Commissioner Dan Gardner of the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries, which enforces compliance of many of the state's workplace regulations. "Sweatshops have no place existing in this day and age. With the proposed ordinance, Portland can play a major role in stamping out sweatshop abuses throughout the world."

Today's rally comes just weeks after the release of an analysis by the Portland Sweatfree Campaign documenting that the City of Portland is buying goods from companies known to have been supplied by subcontractors accused of labor and human rights abuses.

"Portland is currently purchasing items from companies with a history of doing business with sweatshops," said Deborah Schwartz, coordinator of the Portland Sweatfree Campaign with Global Exchange. "The only way to ensure that the city isn't supporting inhumane, illegal working conditions is to require city vendors to meet a basic code of conduct and for the city to join an international consortium that can monitor those commitments."

The Portland Sweatfree Campaign, which organized today's



rally, has asked Portland City Council to pass an ordinance that would require all city contractors, subcontractors and vendors to sign a code of conduct certifying that goods sold to the city are produced in manner that meets basic labor and human rights standards. The ordinance would also commit the city to joining a multi-city and state consortium that would provide independent monitoring and enforcement services, and help to develop a set of sweatfree procurement best practices.

"I wear uniforms purchased by the city with taxpayer money," said Ed Hall, a Portland firefighter. "The city should take that extra step and ensure that the uniforms and other materials it's purchasing are made under fair conditions. Taxpayer dollars should not be used to subsidize human rights abuses."

The Portland Sweatfree Campaign began in 2006 to educate City Council on the steps Portland can take to help end sweatshop abuses. The campaign is currently endorsed by over 40 Portland-based community organizations. For more information, visit www.sweatfree.org/portland.

###