

# Ending Taxpayer Support for Sweatshops

This is the **human reality** of the global apparel industry:

Young women work long hours under harsh conditions for poverty wages. Women are fired if they become pregnant. Workers' health, safety and human rights are ignored. Sweatshops are the norm in an industry that thrives on cutting costs without considering the consequences.

SweatFree Communities' research on uniform factories shows that our tax dollars typically pay for **human rights abuses** when our cities and states buy uniforms and other products.

In Bangladesh, more than 170 garment **workers have died** in factory fires between 2005 and 2010. In 2006, dozens of trapped garment workers, including teenage girls, lost their lives while making garments for a major state government contractor in the United States.

In the United States, one worker making gear for the U.S. military told us: **"Harassment, fear, desperation, sadness, unhappiness, tears – this is what we experienced daily in the factory."** The immigrant workers in this Massachusetts factory faced conditions similar to those in New England mills over a century ago.



Photo by Cassandra Vinograd

A former Bangladeshi garment worker stands with a current New York City garment worker at the memorial for Triangle Shirtwaist Factory workers in Manhattan where 146 garment workers died in a factory fire on March 25, 1911. Atrocious health safety conditions continue to claim the lives of Bangladeshi garment workers today.

## The Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium

**SweatFree Communities** is a U.S. network of grassroots campaign that recognize the potential in government purchasing for creating positive alternatives to global sweatshops. These "sweatfree" campaigns seek to ensure that state and local government agencies spend their tax dollars on products made in humane working conditions by workers who are paid decent wages.

**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

**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

**The Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium** helps the member government agencies to pool resources to monitor working conditions and act with combined strength to meet their goal for sweatshop-free purchasing.

## Take Action!

Contact your governor and mayor and urge them to join the Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium. Find out how at [sweatfree.org/sweatfreeconsortium](http://sweatfree.org/sweatfreeconsortium)

Donate to support the campaign at [sweatfree.org/donate](http://sweatfree.org/donate)

Endorse the campaign at [sweatfree.org/endorse](http://sweatfree.org/endorse)

Contact us to connect with or start a campaign in your community. For more information:  
140 Pine Street, #10 Florence, MA 01062 | 413-586-0974 | [organize@sweatfree.org](mailto:organize@sweatfree.org)

## How Your State, City, County, or School District Can Join the Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium

Affiliation with the Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium is open to all states, cities, counties, local government agencies, and school districts in the United States that purchase apparel.

To join government agencies must:

- Have adopted or be working towards a sweatfree procurement policy.
- Support the purpose and principles of the Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium.
- Require or commit to requiring vendors to disclose names and physical addresses of production facilities and to share this information with the Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium.
- Designate a liaison to the Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium.
- Pay first-year member dues of \$500.

**I believe that... the Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium...will serve as a crucial tool in creating and maintaining standards of workplace fairness and safety in our global economy.**

- Governor David A. Paterson, New York



Photo by Jim West

Father Fred Thelen of Cristo Rey Catholic Church and Pax Christi speaks at a rally at the Michigan state capitol urging the state government to join the Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium and refuse to spend taxpayer dollars to buy uniforms and other goods made in sweatshops.

### How much do we buy?

- The federal government buys over \$500 billion of services and goods annually.
- U.S. federal, state, and local governments buy more than \$10 billion apparel annually.
- Government procurement accounts for 20% of U.S. GDP.

The bottom line: government purchasing is a force, one that governments can use responsibly to create jobs, promote decent working conditions, and a fair global economy.

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