



A Network for Local Action Against Sweatshops

Subsidizing Sweatshops Factsheet for Wisconsin

Subsidizing Sweatshops is the first report of its kind. By revealing severe human rights violations in factories that make public employee uniforms for the federal government, states, and local governments, the report shows how governments inadvertently use tax dollars to increase the downward pressure on labor rights, wages, and working conditions.

Subsidizing Sweatshops is based on thorough person-to-person interviews with workers in twelve factories in nine countries producing for nine major uniform brands: Bob Barker Company, Cintas Corporation, Eagle Industries, Fechheimer Brothers Company, Lion Apparel, Propper International, Rocky Brands Inc., and Williamson-Dickie Manufacturing Company.

Key findings include child labor; illegally low poverty wages; forced and unpaid overtime; verbal, physical, and sexual abuse; pregnancy testing; excessively long work hours causing physical ailments; disregard for freedom of speech or association; and elaborate schemes to deceive corporate auditors.

Here are highlights of companies featured in the report that are suppliers to the state of Wisconsin. The full report is available at www.sweatfree.org/subsidizing.

Brand: Fechheimer Brothers Co.

Factory investigated: Hui Yang Charming Garments in Huizhou City, Guangdong, China

Vendor: Fechheimer Brothers Co

Product: Uniforms for State Patrol Personnel

Contract: T323

<http://vendornet.state.wi.us/vendornet/asp/ContractDetail.asp?SystemContractNumber=1849>

Contract dates:

Conditions found:

- Schedules are sometimes 13 hours of work per day for 30 days straight, which is almost double the legal maximum work hours for a month. Taking a day of rest is not an option for workers, or they will lose three days of wages and bonuses by way of punishment.
- Workers claim that around 20 under-aged workers, as young as 14 years old, are at Charming Garments, violating Chinese labor law.
- Sewing machine operators are paid by piece so when orders are low, wages are very low. When there are big orders, workers must work long hours for no overtime pay.
- Managers prepare fake wage and hour slips to show auditors. Underage workers are hidden from auditors on inspection days by taking a forced "day off."

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Brand: Bob Barker / Leslee Scott

Factory investigated: Arena Fashion Wear, Chittagong, Bangladesh

Vendor: Bob Barker

Product:

Hi-top canvass shoes

Waupun Central Whse Clothing

RFB DJB-777 Hygiene Admission Kits

Contract:

http://vendornet.state.wi.us/vendornet/wais/bulldocs/1273_1.DOC

<http://vendornet.state.wi.us/vendornet/asp/AwardVendorsList.asp?SystemBidNumber=11706&AwardDate=11/11/2011>

Conditions found:

- No safe drinking water; workers drink water from the toilets.
- The high hourly production target is hard to meet. If workers don't fill the target, they must work overtime.
- Employees work without an employment contract.
- When the factory receives emergency orders, working hours are even more excessive. Workers report a few shifts each month from 8 am to 3 am the next day, followed by another shift starting at 8 am.
- Workers cite physical punishment, including beatings, for refusal of shifts, absences, or mistakes.