



A Network for Local Action Against Sweatshops

June 23, 2009

Mayor Gavin Newsom  
City Hall, Room 200  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Mayor Newsom,

As labor rights advocates and anti-sweatshop activists, we applaud your decision to restore enforcement funding for San Francisco's sweatshop-free procurement ordinance. Independent monitoring of factories is an essential tool for holding vendors accountable and ensuring sweatfree purchases. Now we urge you to take the next step: pool San Francisco's enforcement dollars with the resources of other cities and states and leverage your combined strength to really make a difference for workers.

On September 13, 2005, nearly 60 community groups and concerned citizens and activists nationwide celebrated because the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a landmark sweatfree purchasing ordinance. The ordinance had strong standards and San Francisco had a plan for ensuring that good intentions would become good results.

Central to that plan was independent factory monitoring. But two months later you unveiled another critical element of enforcement, calling for a "consortium of public jurisdictions to....better assure that anti-sweatshop policies achieve their intent." You were the first public leader to realize that for a city to reach its goal of buying only sweatfree products, the city would have to pool information, share resources, and combine its strength with other public entities with the same goal. You urged independent monitoring of supplier factories, coordination of policy enforcement, and consolidated purchasing from sweatfree suppliers.

Cities, states, and labor rights advocates heeded your call for a consortium and have been working to form the Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium to help public jurisdictions act with combined strength and resources to defend workers' rights. Your own staff has been part of the Consortium's interim steering committee since its beginning in May 2007. In October 2007 San Francisco provided a \$40,000 grant in support of the Consortium's development.

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Rini Chakraborty  
Andrew Kang Bartlett, Presbyterian Hunger Program (PCUSA)  
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These are all reasons that San Francisco is and has been a beacon in the anti-sweatshop movement.

Now we urge you to take the step you first advocated. Join the Consortium and work cooperatively with other cities and states to share the cost of monitoring and leverage your influence.

San Francisco is seeking to buy sweatfree uniforms and other apparel from an industry in which serious violations of worker rights are the norm rather than the exception. Tens of millions of workers in the global apparel industry work in sweatshops with poverty wages, forced overtime, and dangerous working conditions. Most workers do not know their rights. Those workers who try to organize unions to improve working conditions are usually unsuccessful, finding that employers violate laws protecting their associational and collective bargaining rights with impunity.

In this deplorable state of labor compliance, cities can only purchase sweatfree by using their procurement power to leverage better working conditions. No city can do that on its own, no matter how strong its ordinance and how dedicated its staff. Only the combined strength of many cities and states will make the difference.

San Francisco has been a source of hope to workers who toil in sweatshops making uniforms and other apparel for U.S. public agencies. Now we can best nurture that hope by reaching out to one another and working together to end purchasing from sweatshops.

We look forward to hearing more good news from San Francisco soon.

Sincerely,

Bama Athreya, Executive Director  
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\*signed in individual capacity only

cc: Members of Board of Supervisors:

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