



PRESS STATEMENT

House Passes Amendment to Require U.S. Transportation Security Administration to Buy Uniforms and Textile Products Made With 100% U.S. Content

January 29, 2008

WASHINGTON, DC – Today the U.S. House of Representatives adopted by voice vote an amendment offered by Congressman Larry Kissell (D-NC) to H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, that would mandate that any textile and apparel products purchased by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Transportation Security Administration (TSA) be made with 100 percent U.S. content. The amendment extends the current Berry Amendment program to the Department of Homeland Security but only would cover prospective procurement of uniforms and other textile product for TSA workers by the U.S. government.

"We would like to thank Congressman Kissell in particular for offering this amendment which has been long sought after by the textile industry. The Kissell Amendment will provide an important stimulus to the U.S. textile and apparel manufacturing sector, which employs almost 470,000 workers in the United States," said Anderson Warlick, Chairman of the National Council of Textile Organizations (NCTO).

"In addition to our appreciation to the entire House, we would also like to extend a special thanks to the House leadership and Congressmen Bennie Thompson (D-MS), David Price (D-NC), John Spratt (D-SC), Howard Coble (R-NC), and Mike Michaud (D-ME) for their hard work and support in securing passage this amendment that will create many new badly needed U.S. jobs," said Bruce Raynor, President of UNITE HERE.

"The Kissell Amendment will immediately help textile and apparel companies because it will cover all uniforms purchased by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) employees. This program can be expanded by the Obama Administration to cover other DHS agencies such as FEMA, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Immigration Service – nearly one hundred thousand uniformed employees in all – and we will be asking the President to make that change," said Auggie Tantillo, Executive Director of the American Manufacturing Trade Action Coalition (AMTAC).

"Another benefit of the Kissell Amendment is that it does not require any additional taxpayer money because it involves programs that are already in place and which are already fully funded," said Karl Spilhaus, President of the National Textile Association (NTA).

"Now that the House has added this critical amendment to the stimulus package, it is incumbent upon the U.S. Senate to adopt it too. We look forward to working closely with our friends in the Senate to make sure that this happens," said Kevin M. Burke, President and CEO of the American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA).

"Enactment of the Kissell Amendment will have an important impact on jobs across the United States because textile and apparel companies often rely on sales of uniforms and other textile products to the government to provide critically needed employment and production," said Ruth Stephens, Executive Director of the U.S. Industrial Fabrics Institute (USIFI).

"It should also be noted that the Kissell Amendment was carefully crafted so as not to violate any U.S. trade agreements or obligations," said Larry McClendon, Chairman of the National Cotton Council (NCC).

The U.S. textile and apparel sector has been hit particularly hard by the economic downturn with 60,000 jobs lost during the past twelve months. In the past year, 44 textile plants have closed, including 14 in North Carolina, 10 in South Carolina, 4 in Georgia, 7 in Alabama, and 7 in Virginia.

Berry Amendment Background

The Berry Amendment requires the U.S. Defense Department (DOD) to buy certain products, judged essential to military readiness, with 100 percent U.S. content and labor. These products include clothing and other textile items, specialty steel, and food. The Berry Amendment ensures military readiness through an active defense-industrial base and provides a reliable domestic source for certain vital goods during war times. Preserving the Berry Amendment is the highest priority, but efforts should be made to expand the Berry Amendment to include other national security agencies.

Summary of the Berry Amendment Extension Act (Kissell Amendment):

Currently, the Berry Amendment only applies to procurement by the DOD and the U.S. Coast Guard within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The Berry Amendment Extension Act would require DHS to procure textile and apparel products unless they are domestically produced and manufactured. DHS could waive the Berry requirements if the specific item is not produced in the United States or cannot be procured in a reasonable time at a reasonable cost. It also requires the DHS to apply these provisions when they are consistent with our international agreements.

The immediate practical effect of the Berry Amendment Extension Act's passage is that it would apply the Berry Amendment only to the Transportation Safety Agency (TSA) within DHS. This is because the U.S. government is a signatory to the WTO Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA), which prohibits Berry-type provisions. The United States has the option to exempt agencies critical to national security from the GPA, but only has chosen to exempt the U.S. Coast Guard and TSA within DHS. Nevertheless, The Berry Amendment Extension Act would also allow the Obama Administration to apply the Berry Amendment to other agencies within DHS (Customs and Border Protection, Secret Service, FEMA, among others) should the U.S government choose to exercise its discretion and also exempt them from the GPA.

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