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## **AAFA Kicks Off Material World with Secretary Gutierrez** *Keynote Breakfast Focuses on the Politics of Trade*

**Arlington, VA (Tuesday, April 8, 2008)** – Yesterday, **American Apparel & Footwear Association President and CEO Kevin M. Burke** joined **U.S. Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez** at the U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Textiles and Apparel (OTEXA) sponsored *America Textiles and Apparel Competitiveness Forum* to discuss textile trade policy initiatives, free trade agreements and supply chain and logistics strategies and challenges in the western hemisphere.

Addressing the forum's theme of the competitiveness of the textile and apparel supply chain in the Western hemisphere yesterday, Mr. Burke declared that six public policy initiatives were needed now to make the region more predictable, more business friendly, more integrated and, ultimately, more competitive:

1. Passage of the Colombia Free Trade Agreement;
2. Full implementation of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR);
3. Upgrade of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA);
4. Integration of trade agreements and programs with one another;
5. Improved ports and infrastructure; and
6. Updated U.S. trade financing policies.

All of these initiatives represent opportunities and demonstrate the impact of politics and government policies on the apparel and footwear industries. The importance of government's influence on the industry continued today as Mr. Burke moderated the Material World trade show keynote breakfast, *Politics of Trade*. As a moderator at today's event, Mr. Burke lead an in-depth discussion with industry leaders and Washington insiders about the many issues dominating today's newspaper headlines – from the presidential election to product safety legislation – and their pressure on the apparel and footwear industry. The expert panelists included:

- Don Baum, Senior Vice President of Global Manufacturing, Polo Ralph Lauren Corporation;
- Ken Duberstein, Chairman & CEO, The Duberstein Group;
- Rick Helfenbein, President, Luen Thai USA;
- Tom Travis, Managing Partner, Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg, P.A.; and
- Bob Moore, President & CEO, Prime Tanning Inc.

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*The American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA) is the national trade association representing apparel, footwear and other sewn products companies, and their suppliers, which compete in the global market. AAFA's mission is to promote and enhance its members' competitiveness, productivity and profitability in the global market by minimizing regulatory, commercial, political, and trade restraints.*