

## AAFA Lobbies Obama for Affordable Footwear Act

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Kevin Burke, President and CEO of the American Apparel & Footwear Association

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The American Apparel & Footwear Association closed out 2008 by lobbying President-elect Barack Obama's transition team to include the Affordable Footwear Act as part of the new administration's economic stimulus package, which is expected to be unveiled soon after Obama takes office.

In a recommendation letter sent to the President-elect's transition team dated Dec. 19, the association, through its Affordable Footwear Coalition arm, made the case that passage of the AFA would meet the same goals as the stimulus plan by saving consumers money, securing jobs and increasing consumer spending power. The legislation removes import duties on lower-cost shoes, such as children's footwear, work shoes and other high-duty items. It does not reduce duties on higher-priced fashion footwear.

AAFA President and CEO Kevin Burke on Monday told FOOTWEAR NEWS the inclusion of the AFA in a stimulus plan would have immediate results for both consumers and retailers.

"Like President-elect Obama, the Affordable Footwear Act seeks to help the most vulnerable — America's hardworking lower- and middle-income families — by putting more money in their pockets for something they must buy for their families and themselves, as well as by protecting retail jobs," he said. "The Affordable Footwear Act is not only potentially a job-protection measure for retail and other types of

employees, but also provides direct economic relief for cash-strapped families.”

According to figures released by the association, import duty rates on footwear can run as high as 67.5 percent. In 2007, footwear importers paid \$1.9 billion in duties, more than the duties paid on almost any other product type. “The cumulative effect of these enormous tariffs can represent up to one-third the cost of a pair of value-priced shoes,” said the AAFA letter. “Meaning, a \$15 pair of children’s sneakers could be carrying duty costs of almost \$5 at retail.”

The proposed footwear legislation would cut about \$800 million from that sum with the savings passed directly to consumers.

**WWD**

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