

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA), representing domestic apparel, footwear, other sewn products companies and their suppliers, **I urge you to vote against the Feinstein Amendment to the 2008 Department of Defense Authorization bill** (S. 1547), which could come to the floor today. Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

This amendment seeks to strike an important provision, Section 824, included to protect those American companies responsible for producing the clothing, footwear and other textile-made equipment for the military. Section 824 justly modifies the unfair competition requirements for purchases from Federal Prison Industries (FPI), a government corporation employing federal prison inmates to produce goods and services in prison factories for sale to the federal government. FPI enjoys a mandatory source preference in the federal market, which means that federal agencies are required to purchase from FPI any product that it offers for sale or wishes to produce.

A few years ago, more than 22,000 workers supplied the U.S. military's apparel needs. Today, that number is less than 13,000. Competition from prison labor continues to take the jobs of law-abiding U.S. citizens - despite statutory mandates to the contrary.

Under current law, DOD can buy sole-source from FPI. Section 824 will level the playing field for the industry mandating that any DOD purchase from FPI now must be bid like any other contract, if FPI has more than 5% of the DOD market.

AAFA fully supports Section 824 and would even support its expansion to the entire federal government. On this note, we would also like to **ask for your support for a bipartisan amendment sponsored by Senators Grassley, Harkin and Stabenow** that would ensure that all federal agencies can and should allow companies to compete with FPI to provide products and services if the FPI product is not comparable in terms of quality, price or delivery time.

We applaud the Senate Armed Services Committee for standing behind and supporting the domestic apparel and footwear industry. We greatly appreciate your attention to this important provision.

Sincerely,

Kevin M. Burke
President and CEO

