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## Legislation Introduced to Eliminate Footwear Tariffs

By Jessica Peetoom

*Reps. Crowley, Brady Unveil Initiative to Eliminate Outdated Tariffs on Footwear*

Washington, D.C. - Congressmen Joseph Crowley (D-NY) and Kevin Brady (R-TX), both members of the House Committee on Ways and Means, unveiled the bipartisan Affordable Footwear Initiative Act of 2007 (H.R. 3934) on Wednesday, October 24, legislation that would eliminate an outdated tax on shoes and sneakers paid by American families and consumers.

"The Affordable Footwear Act will end the invisible tax that American families pay every time they buy a pair of shoes for their kids," Crowley said. "The legislation will eliminate an outdated 1930's law that is no longer needed in 2007. I am proud to be working with Congressman Kevin Brady in introducing this initiative that promises real tax relief for millions of Americans."

"As parents of young children ourselves we are calling on Congress to untie the shoe tax," Brady said. "The highest duty taxes are really on the lower-priced shoes. People have to buy shoes, especially for kids. Why should a mom pay 30% more for her child's shoes because of tariffs from half a century ago that are still on the books? Parents have a hard enough time stretching their paycheck."

The Affordable Footwear Act would protect American shoe manufacturers while eliminating import duties worth nearly \$800 million a year on many types of footwear sold into the U.S. Currently, the United States applies a unique regressive tax to footwear imports, meaning that it charges higher rates for lower-valued merchandise. Some of these rates range as high as 67.5%, translating into higher costs for retailers and consumers. The current system has resulted in consumers being charged up to 40% over the market value of footwear worn mostly by children.

This reform is not controversial because it would not affect a protected industry. High footwear duties originated in the 1930s to protect a manufacturing sector that no longer exists as it once did. Over the last 20 years, U.S. footwear production has virtually disappeared except for the few footwear producers that have been successful in focusing on niche items that are distinguished by specialty and quality. Low-priced shoes, made primarily in China, Indonesia and Vietnam, are still subject to these outdated yet protective tariffs. The Affordable Footwear Initiative has generated broad support because it exempts the few footwear products made in the United States.

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