

THE NEW SWEATFREE CAMPAIGN: POOLING COMMUNITY PURCHASING POWER TO ENSURE RESPECT FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS

The SweatFree Communities program at the International Labor Rights Forum is pleased to invite you to launch an exciting sweatfree campaign in your community along with fellow activists across the country. This campaign is a way to pool community resources and people power, city by city. It's about new tools in responsible purchasing, tools that will provide a savings for city officials once adopted. By joining the campaign your community will be able to have a direct and immediate impact on the lives of workers. Whether or not your city already has a sweatfree procurement policy in place, you can bring this campaign to your community.

Here's the idea:

Lots of state and local governments across the country have already changed their procurement laws and regulations to require apparel vendors and other contractors to take responsibility for workers' rights in the supply chain. But the power of each community is relatively small by itself. And government agencies don't have the time and resources needed to evaluate each contractor and their efforts to ensure workers' rights down the supply chain. Fortunately, the City of Madison, Wisconsin, has found a way to help bundle that community power and minimize the expense at the same time.

Virtually all public agency buyers across the country are also authorized to use or "piggyback" on contracts that have been competitively bid by other public buyers. So when the City of Madison put together a uniform contract specifically designed for piggybacking, Madison created a shortcut for thousands of public agencies across the country who may want to use taxpayer dollars responsibly but lack sweatfree legislation. They can now buy uniforms and support workers' rights without their own sweatfree purchasing policy, simply by piggybacking on the Madison contract. If your city already has a policy, they can use the contract too and it's very likely they'll like what they see in Madison because they have one of the stronger sweatfree purchasing policies around.

The Madison contract contains several new sweatfree features that ensure workers who make the uniforms will benefit. Most importantly, the contractor rebates the City of Madison 2% of the contract value to fund independent monitoring of the factories that make the products. That means for every \$100 your community buys off this contract, \$2 is generated to help workers report and remedy violations. The City will work with the Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium to coordinate the monitoring under the contract. We anticipate the monitoring activities themselves will be performed by the independent monitoring organization, the Worker Rights Consortium, in collaboration with local labor rights groups.

The beauty of this approach is it puts workers first in the monitoring process, which means your community power can help build the power of the workers making the stuff paid for with your tax dollars! City by city, one step at a time, we can help reshape the global economy.

We have put together a simple action packet that you can use to convince your community to join this new sweatfree initiative – that is, to piggyback on the City of Madison contract. We hope you will find the vision as enticing as we do, and that procurement and political leaders in your community will feel the same way. Please keep us posted on the actions that you take to get your community involved and feel free contact us with any questions or suggestions for the campaign.

Onwards!

Action steps:

- Step 1: Send a letter to the procurement officer for your city/county/state
- Step 2: Meet with the procurement officer, and with user agencies (police, fire, public transit, others)
- Step 3: Engage political allies

Step 1: Send a letter to the procurement officer for your city/county/state

Sample letter

Dear [public procurement officer]

As a resident of [name of city/county/state], I am writing to propose a way for [name of city/county/state] to save money in the procurement of uniforms and apparel and to ensure respect for the human rights of the workers who make the products.

I have long been concerned about the poor working conditions for apparel workers globally, an issue that has been in the national spotlight since the 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza factory building in Bangladesh, which crushed 1,134 apparel workers to their deaths. This factory collapse revealed the deadly hazards across the apparel industry in Bangladesh. Human rights violations, abusive and unsafe working conditions are the norm in every major apparel-producing region across the world, as documented in a wide range of academic, media, NGO, and company reports. Production of uniforms and apparel for the public sector is no exception, as, for example, a major *New York Times* investigatory report showed in 2013.¹

The good news is that our community can do something to address this human rights crisis in the global apparel industry, and it will not cost us more. In fact, we could end up saving money.

The solution, in short, is to piggyback on a uniform management contract between the City of Madison, Wisconsin, and Galls, LLC. This cooperative contract, established in 2015, is available to public sector buyers across the United States and offers public safety, general trade, supervisory and dress apparel, t-shirts and cotton wear used by Fire, Police, Metro Transit and other agencies. Galls, the contractor, had to demonstrate transparency and capacity to respect the human rights of workers in supplier factories during the RFP (request for proposal) phase, and must ensure compliance with international labor rights and safety standards for the duration of the contract. To create capacity for verification, Galls rebates the City of Madison 2% of the contract value to fund independent monitoring of the factories that make the products under the contract. That means for every \$100 our community buys off this contract, we generate \$2 to help verify compliance.

So, instead of spending the time to develop a new contract to buy apparel, go out for bids or proposals, evaluate bidders, and so on, you may be able to use the Madison contract to buy the uniforms and apparel our agencies need. At the same time, our community would be strengthening respect for human rights of workers who make these products.

¹ Urbina, Ian, "US Flouts Own Advice in Procuring Overseas Clothing," December 22, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/23/world/americas/buying-overseas-clothing-us-flouts-its-own-advice.html>.

As a next step I suggest you review the Madison contract (<http://buysweatfree.org/files/galls.pdf>) to see what products are available that our community may need. Please also feel free to contact the City of Madison Purchasing Supervisor, Brian Pittelli at BPittelli@cityofmadison.com, who can direct you to his contact at Galls.

I look forward to discussing this opportunity to support decent jobs through our community's procurement while saving time and money. I will call you soon to follow up on this request, and please feel free to contact me directly at the number below.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Signature
Name
Contact information

Step 2A: Meet with the procurement officer for your city/county/state

Objective: Get the procurement officer to commit to contact Galls about using the Madison contract for products that they are already planning on purchasing. *Focus the conversation on the products your city/county/state needs.*

1. Bring the Madison contract, including the pricing schedule, to the meeting
2. Ask to see the procurement office's uniform contract schedule
3. Take note of when the procurement office will need products available under the Madison contract
4. If the procurement office needs products made by a different brand than those offered under the Madison contract, the procurement officer can talk to Galls about adding those products to the Madison contract. So, even if the procurement office needs a product not currently listed under the Madison contract, they may still be able to piggyback off the contract to purchase those products.
5. Get a commitment from your procurement officer to contact the City of Madison and Galls about piggybacking to get specific products, and make plans to follow up to ensure the procurement officer fulfills that commitment.

Step 2B: Meet with user agencies

Objective: Obtain support from police, fire, parks and rec, transit, and other agencies for using the Madison contract. *Focus the conversation on both human rights and products.*

1. Review their product needs.
2. Discuss human rights issues in the supply chain. The difference between what they are buying now and what they get through the Madison contract: Now they are buying blind. They most likely don't know where the uniforms are made, and if they know that, they have no assurance that the uniforms are made in decent conditions. Buying through the Madison contract is superior from a human rights viewpoint in three ways:
 - a. The supply chain is transparent. They will know the name and location of every factory that supplies goods under the contract.
 - b. The contractor is required to take steps, for the duration of the contract, to investigate and report on compliance in factories, to remedy violations, and prevent recurrence.
 - c. The factories in the supply chain can be monitored independently and the procurement office can add their strength and market influence to those of other public agencies to press the contractor and brands to address workers' concerns.
3. Get the agency to commit to specific actions in support of the Madison contract, such as calling the procurement office to urge them to use the contract or writing a letter to the editor of the local daily newspaper to express support.

Step 3: Engage Political Allies

Objective: Obtain support from supportive elected officials or other influential community leaders. *Focus the conversation on human rights.*

Even though the procurement office does not need authorization from elected officials to use the Madison contract, their support can help. If the procurement office does not appear interested in using the contract, political leaders can give them the push they need to make this more of a priority. Even if the procurement office is interested, it is also good to inform political leaders to ensure buy-in across the organization.

Resources

Madison contract

<http://buysweatfree.org/files/galls.pdf>

Madison RFP (request for proposal) with labor rights conditions, which are included in the contract

http://buysweatfree.org/files/8300_attachments_a-d_-_copy.pdf

Madison Code of Labor Standards

<http://buysweatfree.org/files/madisonpolicy.pdf>

Public procurement [supply chain registry](#) (the Madison contract supply chain will be uploaded here)

Visit Laborrights.org/SFC for additional activist resources.

Please keep us posted on how your outreach goes. Share your updates with liana@ilrf.org. With any technical questions about the contract, please write to contact@buysweatfree.org.

Thank you!