

Bill a Win for Consumers, U.S. Apparel Industry, and Environment

Washington, DC – Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore) today introduced the U.S. OUTDOOR Act (the Optimal Use of Trade to Develop Outerwear and Outdoor Recreation Act), H.R. 3168, which will remove burdensome and unnecessary tariffs on recreational performance outerwear - jackets and pants used for outdoor activities like skiing and hunting.

Blumenauer was joined by Rep. Greg Walden (R-Ore) in introducing the House bill. Senators Wyden (D-Ore), Crapo (R-ID), Cantwell (D-WA) and Schumer (D-NY) introduced a companion bill today in the Senate, S. 1439.

“At a time when Americans are trying to save money however they can, this bill will make outdoor apparel more affordable while creating investment and job opportunities at home,” **said Rep. Blumenauer.**

“This bill removes unnecessary tariffs on apparel not currently made in the U.S. In addition, the companies that benefit from these reduced tariffs will be required to contribute a portion of their savings toward research programs that are developing ways to keep America’s apparel industry globally competitive and more environmentally sustainable. This is a win for consumers and a win for strong American companies like Columbia, REI, North Face and others looking to reduce costs, improve the quality of their goods and implement sustainable processes.”

“Like many Oregonians, I enjoy Oregon’s diverse outdoor recreational opportunities. That’s why I’m proud to cosponsor this bipartisan bill that will remove unnecessary tariffs that penalize consumers and clothing companies in Oregon that produce and sell high-tech recreational performance outerwear,” **Rep. Walden said.** “Oregon is home to a variety of large and small outdoor clothing manufacturers and retailers that provide good jobs at a time when unemployment in Oregon is at a record low. This bill will remove unnecessary and burdensome costs and allow these companies to create new jobs.”

“Columbia Sportswear Company is proud to offer its support to the U.S. OUTDOOR Act (HR 3168),” **commented Tim Boyle, president and chief executive officer of Columbia Sportswear.** “This Act will help sustain and create family-wage jobs in Oregon and around the country while making high-quality, performance outerwear more accessible for the millions of U.S. families who enjoy outdoor recreation each year. This well-designed piece of legislation goes even further by creating a market-based mechanism to generate funds that will help support critical research to keep America in the forefront of sustainable apparel manufacturing practices.”

“The introduction of this bill represents a commitment from Representative Blumenauer, Senators Wyden, Crapo and Cantwell to the 6.5 million jobs in the active outdoor recreation industry, the viability of outdoor businesses across the country and Americans seeking healthy

and active lifestyles through outdoor recreation,” **commented OIA President and CEO Frank Hugelmeyer.**

“But the bill is also an investment in the United States as a global leader in the sustainable, eco-friendly business practices that are core values of the outdoor industry.”

More than 75 percent of Americans participate in active outdoor recreation each year, contributing \$730 billion and 6.5 million jobs to the U.S. economy, including jobs in the U.S. apparel industry.

While the average duty on imports is less than 2 percent, the rates on recreational performance outerwear averages a much higher 17 percent, and sometimes up to 28 percent. These disproportionately high tariffs were originally implemented to protect U.S. manufacturers from foreign competition, but now they stifle innovation and raise costs throughout our economy.

The legislation introduced today will make apparel more affordable while also establishing the Sustainable Textile and Apparel Research (STAR) Fund. The fund will make grants available to certain non-profit organizations to advance U.S. competitiveness in lean manufacturing technologies and supply chain analysis. The STAR Fund grants, made available through a competitive process administered by the Department of Commerce, will help the global textile and apparel industry minimize energy and water use, reduce waste and global warming emissions, and incorporate sustainable practices into a product's entire life cycle.

Through these mechanisms, this legislation will support the outdoor industry, consumers of outdoor products, and environmental practices throughout the textile industry supply chain.

July 10, 2009

Media Contact: Erin Allweiss

202-225-4813 Office/202-446-8265 Cell

Erin.Allweiss@mail.house.gov