
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

July 9, 2007

Ald. Tony Zielinski
286-3769

Milwaukee Set To Become First "Fair Trade City" In U.S.

The Common Council may vote Wednesday to designate Milwaukee as the nation's first "fair trade city."

Today the Council's Finance and Personnel Committee voted to recommend approval of legislation seeking to make Milwaukee the first U.S. city recognized under "fair trade" standards, and the full Council will take up the issue at its regular meeting on Wednesday (July 11) at City Hall.

Ald. Tony Zielinski, primary sponsor of the fair trade city resolution, said he believes the time is right for the city to step up and garner "fair trade" status. "Fair trade city status is the right thing to do from a human rights standpoint because of the horrible sweatshop conditions that produce far too many products that make it into this country," he said.

"But fair trade is also important because sweatshop practices in other countries are costing Americans family supporting jobs, and government must use its purchasing power to lead the way to social justice," the alderman said.

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Fair Trade City Status/ADD ONE

With adoption of the resolution, the City of Milwaukee joins more than 300 European Fair Trade Towns and two towns in the United States that have:

- Passed a resolution supporting fair trade.
- Offer a range of readily available fair trade products in the area's shops and local cafes and catering establishments.
- Numerous workplaces and community organizations that use fair trade products.
- Media coverage and popular support for the fair trade city campaign.
- A local fair trade steering committee to ensure continued commitment to fair trade city status.

A local steering committee has been formed, Ald. Zielinski said, and if the Council approves the resolution Milwaukee will have met all of the requirements.

Michael Howden, coordinator of the Milwaukee Clean Clothes Campaign – which convinced the Common Council to pass an ordinance in 2004 to purchase sweatshop free work clothing for City of Milwaukee employees – said the fair trade city status is important for all Milwaukeeans to embrace.

“We’ve found that most of the Milwaukee residents we talk to about the fair trade issue agree with the moral and ethical stand that is being taken against the degradation, exploitation and abuse that occurs in sweatshops, and now we’re moving forward with educating people so that governments, businesses and individuals can make responsible buying decisions and support fair trade,” said Howden, a member of the local fair trade steering committee.

“We can pass all the legislation in the world, but if there is no mechanism in place to insure that all the products we are purchasing are consistent with ethical labor standards, then we will not have accomplished anything,” said Ald. Zielinski.

Ald. Robert J. Bauman and Ald. Michael S. D’Amato are co-sponsors of the fair trade city resolution.

Wednesday’s Council meeting will start at 9 a.m. in the third floor Council Chamber at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St.