

Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers International Union

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FRANK HURT
INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

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The Honorable Joseph Biden
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Biden:

On behalf of the Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers International Union, I am writing to urge your strong opposition to the proposed tobacco legislation currently being considered by the Senate.

The legislation passed by the Senate Commerce Committee, S. 1415, would have a devastating impact on hundreds of thousands of working men and women around the country who are employed by the U.S. tobacco companies, their suppliers and subsidiaries. Together with the International Association of Machinists, our unions represent nearly 25,000 manufacturing workers in the tobacco industry.

The legislation would drive the domestic tobacco industry offshore. Beyond the unmanageable financial burden the legislation places on the tobacco companies, the bill's provisions related to the industry's ability to export its product are so onerous as to leave the companies with little choice but to close plants here and move production to low-wage countries, including Mexico. Nearly half of U.S. cigarette manufacturing jobs at the major companies are dependent on the export market.

Simply put, why would companies produce cigarettes with restrictive packaging requirements in the U.S. when they could move manufacturing to countries without such restrictions? Each of the major domestic manufacturers has sophisticated and expensive production operations in a multitude of countries other than the United States. It would be very easy for them to close plants here and shift production to existing foreign facilities.

The bill's provisions regarding the FDA's authority to radically change the ingredients of tobacco products also encourage the companies to move production offshore. Again, in order for the industry to continue production in the U.S., companies must have the ability to manufacture a product consumers, foreign and domestic, want to purchase.

In short, this legislation will have the effect of banning cigarette manufacturing in the United States while allowing consumption to continue.

We also reject the idea that the "adjustment assistance" language in the bill is an acceptable alternative to job loss. The historical experience with these programs is that they are dismal failures; transitioning workers to a lower standard of living. Our members want to keep the jobs they have which provide good wages and benefits and a strong standard of living.

As the Senate considers this punitive tobacco legislation, we urge you to consider not only the tens of thousands of tobacco workers who are directly affected, but also the hundreds of thousands of men and women employed by companies located in virtually every state which supply the tobacco industry.

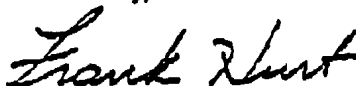
Hundreds of companies in industries such as paper and packaging, transportation, printing and graphics, commercial inks and glues, textiles, port and maritime and retail will suffer as the tobacco companies close factories here and relocate production abroad.

Finally, we urge you to oppose the massive new cigarette excise tax passed by the Senate Finance Committee. This tax would also lead to tremendous job loss in the tobacco industry. Moreover, it is a highly regressive tax that has its most severe impact on working families and the poor.

The BC&T International is committed to effective policies which will stop underage use of tobacco products. Our record is long and clear on this important issue. However, any program put forth by Congress should not wipe out hundreds of thousands of jobs and destroy the standard of living in communities across the country.

Again, we call on you to oppose this misguided legislation. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Frank Hurt
International President

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