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## **Council Adopts Anti-Sweatshop Law**

**The ordinance would eventually require garment makers who sell to the city or its employees to pay workers a living wage.**

By Patrick McGreevy, Times Staff Writer  
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Concerned that uniforms for police officers and other city employees might be produced in sweatshops, the Los Angeles City Council approved an ordinance Tuesday that eventually would require garment-makers who are city contractors to pay a living wage.

The anti-sweatshop law, approved 13 to 0, requires city contractors and firms on city-approved lists for employee purchases to sign a code of conduct that affirms that they and their suppliers will abide by all workplace laws. The council agreed to pay \$50,000 to a company to monitor compliance, including factory inspections.

"Here in Los Angeles, taxpayers should not subsidize sweatshops," said Councilman Eric Garcetti, an author of the measure. "We should not buy our city uniforms, our desk chairs, our computers or our work boots from companies that exploit their workers, that pay poverty wages and scoff at the rule of law."

More than a dozen union activists and other supporters of the law said Los Angeles would be the first major city to adopt the measure, which they hoped would serve as a model nationwide.

Guadalupe Hernandez told the council that she worked for 12 years in sweatshops, where 12-hour days and low wages were the rule. "I am a taxpayer and I don't want my tax money used for this type of exploitation," Hernandez said.

Garment industry representatives said the ordinance would hurt local firms that want to sell to the city and would largely be unenforceable against overseas clothing makers.

"It's just for show and to pad the city payroll," said Joe Rodriguez, executive director of the Garment Contractors Assn. of Southern California.

Rodriguez estimated that there are about 1,000 garment-making firms in Los Angeles that employ about 30,000 workers. He said that many firms are struggling to compete with overseas companies.

City Administrative Officer William Fujioka estimated that if the living wage was applied to procurement, the city would pay an extra \$20,000 to \$70,000 on annual contracting for apparel and related accessories of \$3 million.

Although Massachusetts and Madison, Wis., have similar ordinances, Garcetti said, Los Angeles is the "sweatshop capital of the nation" and needs to set an example for other large cities.

The ordinance's immediate impact would be to require firms that make garments, uniforms and shoes bought by the city to sign a code of conduct. If the city's monitoring firm determines that a garment company is not complying with workplace laws, that company could lose its contract.