

ROLL CALL



By Emily Heil and Elizabeth Brotherton
Roll Call Staff
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Congressional Fashionista. Rep. Earl Blumenauer might be known for his love of bow ties, but who knew the Oregon Democrat harbored such a deep love of fashion?

The outdoorsy Blumenauer introduced legislation last week to reduce tariffs on imported recreational performance outerwear — think the vests, jackets and pants worn by hikers, hunters, fisherman and mountaineers.

But affordable style isn't Blumenauer's primary motivation. Aptly titled the "U.S. Outdoor Act," Blumenauer's bill would serve to lower operating costs for companies such as Columbia Sportswear, REI and North Face, which face average tariffs on their products of 17 percent (compared with the 2 percent average duty on all other imports).

"At a time when Americans are trying to save money however they can, this bill will make outdoor apparel more affordable," Blumenauer said.

Originally, the unusually high tariffs were meant to protect U.S. manufacturers from foreign competition, but they no longer serve that purpose because there is no commercially viable production of recreational outerwear in the United States, Blumenauer argues.

The measure also would create a fund that will provide grants to nonprofits that research ways for the apparel industry to become more eco-friendly. Companies would be required to donate a portion of their savings from the reduced tariffs to the fund.

This isn't the first time Blumenauer has pushed for cheaper fashion — he has authored similar legislation to reduce the tariffs on certain types of shoes.

While HOH might not be into the great outdoors, we do like the idea of more affordable shoes.