

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS -- (Senate - July 10, 2009)

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By Mr. WYDEN (for himself, Mr. **CRAPO**, Ms. **CANTWELL**, Mr. **ENZI**, and Mr. **SCHUMER**):

S. 1439. A bill to provide for duty-free treatment of certain recreational performance outerwear, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the U.S. Outdoor Act. No denying that this economy has got Americans worried. People are stressed, and with good reason. One thing that we see time and again during recessions is that people look to get their minds off the tough times for just a little while with low-cost, simple activities that the whole family can enjoy. Outdoor recreation fits that bill; it makes people healthier and happier too.

But recreational performance outerwear--jackets and pants used for skiing and snowboarding, mountaineering, hunting, fishing, and dozens of other outdoor activities--are assessed some of the highest duty rates applied to any products imported into the U.S. These disproportionately high tariffs, let us call them what they are, taxes, were originally implemented to protect U.S. outerwear manufacturers from foreign competition. Instead, now these import taxes stifle innovation, add substantial costs for outdoor businesses, and ultimately raise the prices we all pay at the cash register. We can fix this, help these companies to better compete globally while investing in eco-friendly technology and jobs here in the U.S., and help consumers in these tough times so more people can get out and enjoy the great outdoors.

So today, I am proud to introduce the U.S. Optimal Use of Trade to Develop Outerwear and Outdoor Recreation Act, or the U.S. Outdoor Act. This bill is the result of partnership between performance outerwear manufacturers and the domestic textile and

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apparel industry. In 2007, the U.S. International Trade Commission found that there was no commercially viable production of performance outerwear in the U.S.. This legislation reflects those findings, and makes a solid investment in U.S. jobs. It spurs outdoor recreation and its industry, which accounts for \$730 billion dollars and 65 million jobs across the U.S., with 73,000 jobs in Oregon, and this bill can potentially create many more. This would also help lower costs for consumers, who pay \$289 billion in outdoor retail sales and services across the country, with \$4.6 billion in Oregon.

The U.S. Outdoor Act eliminates the import duty for qualifying recreational performance outerwear, bringing duties that can be as high as 28 percent down to zero. It also establishes the Sustainable Textile and Apparel Research, STAR, fund, which invests in U.S. technologies and jobs that focus on sustainable, environmentally conscious manufacturing, helping textile and apparel companies work towards minimizing their energy and water use, reducing waste and their carbon footprint, and ^[+] incorporating efficiencies that help them better compete globally. FEEDBACK

The U.S. Outdoor Act reduces the costs for U.S. companies and consumers, encourages Americans to take part in healthy and active lifestyles through outdoor recreation, spurs economic activity, invests in the U.S. textile industry, supports American jobs and competitiveness, and encourages sustainable business practices to benefit the environment so we all can continue to enjoy the beauty that is the great outdoors.

I want to thank the Outdoor Industry Association, for their tireless work with my office, and with the U.S. ITC and other agencies in perfecting this bill. I also want to acknowledge and thank those in the U.S. textile and apparel industry who have partnered with the outdoor industry to develop a thoughtful and well balanced bill that supports American jobs and U.S. technologies. I thank my house colleague, Congressman *Blumenauer*, who had introduced an earlier version of this bill in the last Congress and is introducing companion legislation. Finally, thank you to my Senate colleagues, Senator *Crapo*, who is an original cosponsor of this bill, Senator *Cantwell*, Senator *Enzi*, and Senator *Schumer*.

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