



October 7, 2016

CNN  
Attn: Anderson Cooper  
10 Columbus Circle  
New York, NY 10019-8012

Dear Mr. Cooper:

Like most Americans we are looking forward to the Presidential debate on Sunday.

As you finalize your questions on jobs and the economy, **we are encouraging you to ask the candidates for their views on the U.S. prison economy.** This is especially important given the attention that Made in USA has received in the campaigns thus far.

Unknown to many Americans, the Department of Justice runs a network of prison factories that make clothes, furniture, and other items that are purchased by the U.S. government. Known as UNICOR, this organization “employs” about 12,000 inmates at 83 prison factories around the country.

Government procurement officials are required to check with UNICOR before making purchasing decisions. Only if they can't find an article, or if UNICOR gives them permission to look elsewhere, can they purchase items made in U.S. factories. What's more, U.S. prison facilities pay inmates as little as 23 cents per hour, while UNICOR itself is not subject to the same health or safety laws as Made in USA manufacturers. The U.S. government rightly prohibits the importation of goods made with prison labor, but incredibly, gives itself a preference when buying goods made in the United States with prison labor.

In August, we contacted four Presidential candidates – [Secretary Clinton](#), [Mr. Trump](#), [Governor Johnson](#), and [Dr. Stein](#) – to ask if they would commit to end this preferential arrangement so small Made in USA manufacturers can compete and employ Americans.

Only Dr. Stein responded – with an enthusiastic yes.

UNICOR's unchecked expansion into the U.S. economy destroys manufacturing, closes factories, and results in lost American jobs. This is especially detrimental to the apparel industry, where UNICOR has now emerged as the single largest supplier of clothing to the U.S. military.

**We encourage you to ask each candidate if they will end the prison economy if they are elected President.**

Sincerely,

Rick Helfenbein  
President and CEO

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