



October 19, 2011

The Honorable Jim Cooper
United States House of Representatives
1536 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Cooper:

On behalf of the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), the nation's leading small business advocacy organization, thank you for introducing H.R. 3210, the Retailers and Entertainers Lacey Implementation and Enforcement Fairness (RELIEF) Act. The RELIEF Act provides for a common-sense application of the Lacey Act, so that retailers and entertainers do not get unknowingly caught up in the penalties that come from 2008 amendments to the Lacey Act aimed at stopping illegal logging.

The 2008 amendments made it illegal to buy or travel with certain products containing rare plants or wood made illegally in foreign countries. Unfortunately, many common items such as guitars and antiques contain these types of wood, but knowing their origin is virtually impossible for small businesses. Even though the majority of these items were made prior to passage of the 2008 amendments, retailers and entertainers are now feeling the effects of the law if they try to sell such products. This reality is particularly harmful to small businesses affected by the law, since often times they may be unaware that such activity is actually illegal.

Fortunately, your RELIEF Act would help these small businesses. The RELIEF Act would exempt products made prior to the enactment of the 2008 Lacey Act amendments. It would also provide relief for small businesses that unknowingly violate the Lacey Act by providing a waiver of penalties for such businesses.

H.R. 3210 would also make it easier for small businesses to determine what items they are not allowed to purchase, by establishing a database of all foreign companies that trade covered plants and trees. The RELIEF Act would also help by streamlining the documentation process for importers and exporters of plant and wood products.

NFIB applauds your introduction of the RELIEF Act, and looks forward to working with you to help ensure that this common-sense legislation becomes law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Eckerly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Susan Eckerly
Senior Vice President
Public Policy

National Federation of Independent Business

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