



Baldwin-Scott bill will help consumers bring jobs home from China, author says

The coronavirus has shown that having everything made in China was a bad idea. Consumers can fix that with their spending. The Baldwin-Scott bill will help.

PHILADELPHIA, PA, UNITED STATES, May 15, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A great deal of attention currently is being paid to the threat to American national security from our dependence on China for medical, military, and food supplies. And not just China: during the coronavirus crisis, some seventy nations have issued bans on the export of essential medical products.

But there is another dimension to the problem: the destruction of lives, families, and communities when factories were closed and moved to China or elsewhere. Those communities never recovered, and the resulting social and economic harm has been well captured by a leading indicator studied by Princeton professors Anne Case and Angus Deaton. Case and Deaton have followed "deaths of despair" among white middle-age Americans. These are deaths from suicide, overdose, and alcohol abuse, and the onset and trajectory of those deaths exactly match that of America's trade in goods deficit with China, beginning in 2001. What to do? One answer must lie with the government, making policies and purchases that result in the reshoring of our essential industries.

However, that is a necessary but insufficient condition. We will recover those jobs, and their associated prosperity, only when the American consumer becomes involved. So long as the consumer is ready to purchase a Buick made in China or a Chevrolet made in Mexico, we will not solve the problem. Conversely, when Nabisco knows it can't sell an Oreo made in Mexico, it won't move the plant there.

Current polling reports that American consumers have awakened to the proposition that having everything made in China was a bad idea. Having reached that conclusion, they also conclude that it would be better to have things made in the United States. And they are ready to bring to bear the power of their pocketbooks for that purpose.

But how to seek out those American-made products, when they are lost in the noise of all the foreign goods? The Tariff Act and other laws require disclosure of foreign country of origin, but only on the product or its package. What if, especially now, one is buying something on the Internet? The labeling laws do not apply there.

This week, Senators Tammy Baldwin (D. Wisconsin) and Rick Scott (R. Florida) introduced a bill that would correct that. The Country of Origin Labeling Online Act, or COOL Online Act, will require that when a product is offered for sale online, the description of the product must indicate in a conspicuous place the country of origin of the product as required by the Tariff Act or other applicable law.

The manufacturing sector has always been essential to the American economy, and its hollowing out has had grave effects. The cataclysmic effects of the coronavirus pandemic on American hospitality and other service industries make the manufacturing sector all the more essential: it is here that the new jobs can be created to begin replacing the 40 million we have lost, many never to return.

And it is here that the American citizen-consumer can have the greatest effect, by bringing their

spending home, to a product made in a community across America. The Baldwin-Scott bill will empower them to do that, and the sooner it is enacted, the better.

James Stuber is the author of *What if Things were Made in America Again: How Consumers Can Rebuild the Middle Class by Buying Things Made in American Communities* (Current Affairs Press, 2017), and the founder of Made in America Again, a coalition of consumers dedicated to that purpose (www.madeinamericaagain.org.)

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