



Office of the Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

October 14, 2010

MEMORANDUM FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENT COMPONENTS

FROM: THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be "Eric Holder", is written over the printed name of the Attorney General.

SUBJECT: Federal Prison Industries

The purpose of this memorandum is to express my strong support for the Federal Prison Industries program (FPI or trade name UNICOR), an important Justice Department program. I ask you to support this critical program by encouraging your staff to purchase FPI products and services to the greatest extent practicable in accordance with the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR).¹

Through the outstanding work of the investigating and prosecuting components of the Department, we yield thousands of successful cases each year, resulting in continued growth of the federal prison population. Our responsibility to society does not end when the prison gates close, however. For the more than 37,500 people who work in our federal prisons around the country, that is when the work begins. All of us in the Department of Justice are committed to supporting prison programs, for we all have a stake in the outcome. We must help offenders change the course of their lives such that they leave prison with a commitment to becoming law-abiding, tax-paying members of our community, and with knowledge and skills that will support that objective.

The bottom line is that Federal Prison Industries is an integral part of our efforts to keep Americans safe. As an initial matter, FPI is a critical component of the Department's reentry efforts. FPI provides job skills training to inmates confined in our federal prisons around the country through the production of market-quality goods and services. Research has demonstrated that inmates who participate in FPI are 24 percent less likely to commit crimes and 14 percent more likely to be employed after release, when compared to similar inmates without FPI experience. Additionally, FPI is vital to the safety and security of federal prisons: by keeping a large number of inmates constructively occupied, FPI reduces inmate idleness and the violence and disruption that often accompanies such inactivity. FPI helps make prisons safer for both staff and inmates. Finally, beyond helping the Department with reentry and prison management, FPI supports the Department's efforts by purchasing 54 percent of its raw materials from businesses owned by women, minorities, and those who are disadvantaged.

¹See 18 U.S.C. § 4121 *et seq.*; Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 8.6.

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FPI relies on agencies and departments in the federal government to buy their products, thereby allowing this wholly-owned government corporation to operate in a self-sustaining manner. In recent months, as a result of a drop in sales to federal agencies, FPI has been forced to close factories, displacing hundreds of civilian workers, and reducing the impact of one of the Department's most important correctional programs. We need your help to prevent any further erosion of the program.

I am asking each of you to review FPI's extensive catalog of products and services, which is available online at http://www.unicor.gov/prodservices/prod_dir_schedule/, in order to ensure that your procurement staff consistently support FPI to the greatest extent possible. The attached summary sheet highlights the various product lines available through Federal Prison Industries.

Thank you very much for your support.