

# U.S. trade deficit with China zooms

## More U.S. companies choosing China as the location to produce manufactured goods

America's trade imbalance with China is continuing to worsen, according to statistics released in February by the Foreign Trade Division of the U.S. Census Bureau.

In 2007, the trade deficit with China (exports minus imports) passed the quarter trillion dollar mark: \$256.3 billion. U.S. imports from China set a new record: \$321.5 billion. That's the equivalent of \$1,068 of Chinese goods for every man, woman and child in America, though even that figure is a way-below-wholesale price; it's what U.S. companies paid to Chinese enterprises. Meanwhile, U.S. exports to China also rose, to an estimated \$65.2 billion, though it consisted mostly of raw materials, parts and machines.

Overall the U.S. trade deficit with all its trading partners was down slightly, to \$711.6 billion in 2007, from \$758.5 billion in 2006. That owes to lowered consumer spending and a decline in the value of the dollar.

But China trade continues to zoom. The United States now imports more from China than from any other country. It's not like Chinese brands are filling American shelves. For the most part, imports are a case of U.S. companies choosing China as the location

to produce manufactured goods. Production that used to be outsourced to other less-developed countries is coming to be concentrated in China.

The imbalance is alarming to leaders of the American labor movement, which at one time was strongest in manufacturing.

"Our imbalance with China is unsustainable," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney in a press statement reacting to the release of the annual trade statistics. "Our government must take immediate and effective actions to ensure that the Chinese government plays by the rules — with respect to currency, illegal subsidies, tax policies and workers' rights."

The labor federation is backing a bill in Congress, the Currency Reform for Fair Trade Act (HR 2492), which declares currency manipulation an illegal trade subsidy and provides American manufacturers the opportunity to seek relief against countries that don't freely exchange their currency, including China.

China is so dominant in the consumer goods sector that it calls into question the recent stimulus package passed by Congress. To combat the recession, the IRS will be mailing out checks to Americans in the coming months, and the hope is they'll go shopping. But if they're spent on clothes, toys or electronic goods, those dollars likely won't employ American workers other than those whose jobs are to transport or sell the goods.

## Consumer prices rise higher in Portland area than rest of nation

The cost of everything is going up.

Last month the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics announced the Consumer Price Index (CPI) climbed 3.7 percent last year in the region running from Portland metro to Salem.

That's the biggest increase in a decade — and it tops the national CPI, which was 2.8 percent.

The CPI measures a broad range of consumer expenses in dozens of categories. Prices in the region were up in nearly every category in 2007. Gasoline jumped 11 percent; the average cost for medical care increased 12.7; and food and beverages rose 3.4 percent. The only declines locally were seen in natural gas, recreation and education — and none went down by more than 1 percent.

Since 2001, the inflation rate in the area has hovered around 2.6 percent or lower. The highest jump in the past 10 years was 3.3 percent.

Another measurement BLS takes is the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). It measured 208.556 for the 2007 annual average. That means a market basket of goods and services that cost \$100 in 1982-84 would have cost \$208.56 in 2007.



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## Roger G. Worthington, P.C., leads the fight to find a cure

### Mesothelioma: treatment and compensation

#### Do I have a case?

If you've been diagnosed with mesothelioma, you may be able to obtain compensation for your disease. Why? Because mesothelioma is caused by asbestos, and the companies that made asbestos-containing products knew it was deadly. The law can force these companies to pay for poisoning you. The times, dates, places and products related to your asbestos exposure will determine whether or not you have a valid claim. Our firm can give you an idea about possible compensation in a ten minute phone call, or quicker.

#### Meso survival

If you've been diagnosed with mesothelioma, you're fighting for your life. Untreated, mesothelioma runs its course in about seven months. With the right doctors and the right therapy, it's possible to survive for as long as five years. Our firm works with the best meso specialists on the West Coast, and we have donated more than \$2 million to help find better treatment and a cure for mesothelioma. We can help you navigate the health maze and put you directly in touch with the best meso doctors in America.

#### Taking charge

If you've been diagnosed with mesothelioma, you've gone through every emotion humanly possible, as has your family. Now is the time to take charge. Medically, you have options and you have hope. Legally, you have rights related to asbestos exposure and disease. Our firm can help put you back in the driver's seat.

#### Fighting back

Your mesothelioma was likely caused by asbestos. Makers of asbestos-containing products knew they were selling lethal products since the 1930s, yet they did nothing to warn. Shipyard workers, pipefitters, insulators, painters, drywallers, machinists, housewives, students, Navy veterans — these and countless others were needlessly poisoned for the sake of profit. For every victim who fights, thousands of others have silently gone to the grave. We can help you fight back and let the poisoners know that they won't be let off the hook for their callous acts.

#### Demanding what's yours

If you've been diagnosed with mesothelioma, your medical bills are mounting. You may be deeply concerned about your family's finances if the disease progresses. Demanding compensation from the companies that poisoned you can help pay for medical treatment and can help assure that your family is provided for. We can help.

#### Why us?

Mesothelioma cases are all we handle. Although each case is different, we've recovered over \$1.2 billion in judgments and settlements for our clients in the last 18 years. We can't guarantee a recovery in your case, but we can guarantee that we'll do everything in our power to help get one. Trust your case to a firm that is expert in this complex field. We play to win.

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## IN MEMORIAM

**Barbara Jo Hougen**, first vice president of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council and a longtime member and former officer of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 89, died Feb. 11, 2008, in Billings, Montana. Cause of death was liver and kidney failure. She was 57.

Hougen was born in Idaho Falls, Idaho, Nov. 29, 1950, daughter of Roger and Bonnie Wise Hougen. She attended business school in Idaho Falls before moving to Portland, where she worked for GTE (later, Verizon) for over 30 years.

She was an active member of IBEW Local 89, which is headquartered in Everett, Wash. Hougen served as a shop steward and chairperson for the Beaverton, Ore., unit from 1989-1998. She was elected to the union's Executive Board in 1981 and elected president of the local in 1986. She held that post for 12 years.

Hougen was first vice president of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council and was a delegate to IBEW interna-

tional conventions and to Oregon AFL-CIO state conventions. She had just been re-elected to the labor council post.

She retired from her job at Verizon on Dec. 15, 2007.

Soon after that, she fell ill and was hospitalized. She was taken from Portland to Billings, where she died with her family at her side.

She was preceded in death by her parents and a brother, Gerry.

Survivors include her siblings, Phyllis Thornton, Vicki Bertz, Britt Hougen, Sheila Wise and Tom Hougen; best friends Connie and Larry Pope; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Cremation has taken place and, at her request, no service will be held.

Remembrances can be made to: Hillsboro Public Library, 2850 NE Brookwood Parkway, Hillsboro, OR 97124; IBEW Local 89, P.O. Box 2330, Everett, WA 98213; or Animal Aid Inc., P.O. Box 863, Beaverton, OR 97075.