

WASHINGTON, DC – Last night, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 5932, the “Organized Retail Theft Investigation and Prosecution Act of 2010, by unanimous consent. This bill will direct the Attorney General to establish an Organized Retail Theft Investigation and Prosecution Unit to combat the growing problem of organized retail theft. This is a bipartisan bill, introduced by Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (VA), Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee’s Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, and cosponsored by Committee Chairman John Conyers, Jr. (MI), Committee Ranking Member Lamar Smith (TX), and Committee Vice Ranking Member Bob Goodlatte (VA).

These Members have long been committed to finding a way to do more to combat organized retail theft, in which sophisticated, multi-level criminal organizations steal large amounts of high value products, focusing on small and easily resalable items, and then resell the goods through a variety of means. This phenomenon harms retailers and, ultimately, consumers, who pay higher prices because of the losses to retailers and who sometimes undertake health risks by purchasing stolen items such as baby formula, which may not have been stored properly.

Congressman Scott stated, “Organized retail theft rings often operate in multiple jurisdictions, making it difficult or impossible for state or local law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute them effectively. This bill responds to the need for a better coordinated and more concentrated federal effort to prosecute offenders and help states and localities combat this type of crime.”

Chairman Conyers stated, “This bill is an important measure to fight crime that targets our business community. I’m pleased at the broad coalition of supporters calling for its enactment.”

Ranking Member Lamar Smith said, “The vast marketplace on the Internet has made it increasingly difficult for law enforcement officials to identify and apprehend organized retail thieves. According to the FBI, organized retail theft costs businesses more than \$30 billion in losses annually. By requiring the Attorney General to establish an investigative unit in the Justice Department dedicated to these cases, this bill cracks down on organized retail theft and protects American businesses.”

Congressman Goodlatte stated, “Organized Retail Theft is a huge and growing problem in the U.S., costing businesses more than \$30 billion in losses annually. Our bipartisan legislation is

an important step in combating this widespread problem by creating an Organized Retail Theft unit within the Department of Justice which will ensure coordination among the FBI, ICE, U.S. Secret Service, and Postal Inspectors in all investigations.”

H.R. 5932 is supported by a number of businesses and organizations, including the Coalition Against Retail Crime, the Food Marketing Institute, the National Association of Chain Drug Stores, the Entertainment Merchants Association, the Retail Industry Leaders Association, the National Retail Federation, and eBay.

# # #