

WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott addressed the Virginia Retail Loss Prevention Conference in Norfolk, Virginia last Thursday, August 20, 2009 concerning his efforts to focus attention on the issue of Organized Retail Crime. "Organized Retail Crime is a growing problem that puts consumers at risk and costs retailers billions of dollars," said Scott. "Congress is examining this problem and considering ways to effectively deter its growth and to protect consumers from harm."

Scott, who is the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, said that the Subcommittee is developing a hearing for this fall which will focus on federal law enforcement's role in combating Organized Retail Crime and what they can do in the future to focus more attention and resources on this problem.

Organized Retail Crime involves sophisticated criminal networks made up of many individuals who steal large quantities of goods from retailers and sell the goods for profit through pawn shops, flea markets and increasingly on the Internet. Experts estimate organized retail crime losses in the tens of billions of dollars annually.

When stolen goods are mishandled or altered, the health and safety of end users can be jeopardized. In most cases, consumers are unaware of the unlawful source of the products purchased from anonymous sellers. This is of particular concern when sensitive items such as baby formula, diabetic test strips and over the counter medicine is involved. Recent investigations have uncovered sensitive health and beauty items stored at high temperatures damaging the safety and reliability of the product.

Scott has introduced H.R. 1166, the "E-Fencing Enforcement Act of 2009" which would impose reasonable duties on online marketplaces with respect to goods sold by high volume sellers when there is reason to believe items listed for sale were unlawfully acquired.

At the conference in Norfolk, Scott praised those in attendance, including merchants, law enforcement, and retail loss prevention professionals for their dedication to combating retail crime. Mr. Scott commended the efforts of organizations such as the Retail Alliance, and the Coalition Against Retail Crime, who have focused much needed attention on the problem of Organized Retail Crime.

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