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CONTACT

[Spencer Hurwitz](#)

[Audrey Cook](#)

(202) 224-3344

Blackburn, Ossoff Introduce Bill to Crack Down on Fentanyl Trafficking, Dangerous Counterfeits, and Imports Made with Forced Labor

DENIED Act Empowers Law Enforcement to Target Shippers Exploiting De Minimis Trade Rules

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – U.S. Senators **Marsha Blackburn** (R-Tenn) and **Jon Ossoff** (D-Ga.) introduced the *Detection and Exclusion of Negligent, Illicit, and Extralegal Deliveries (DENIED) Act* to crack down on fentanyl trafficking, protect Americans from unsafe counterfeits, and prevent bad actors from importing products made with forced labor into the United States by exploiting U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s (CBP) screening process:

“Foreign criminals and shady businesses exploit vulnerabilities in our trade system to import products made with forced labor, slip counterfeit goods into U.S. markets, and smuggle drugs across the southern border,” **said Senator Blackburn**. “We need to strengthen efforts to prevent bad actors from importing unethical goods, and our *DENIED Act* would combat the fentanyl epidemic, protect U.S. intellectual property, and counter forced labor practices around the world.”

“Senator Blackburn and I are introducing this bipartisan bill to strengthen enforcement against imports tainted by forced labor and illegal trade practices,” **said Senator Ossoff**.

BACKGROUND

- De minimis entry permits imports valued under \$800 to enter the United States duty-free through a streamlined inspection process, allowing CBP to focus its resources on higher-risk shipments.
- While most businesses follow the rules, some have exploited the de minimis process to import products made with forced labor, especially from regions like Xinjiang, China. This allows them to bypass critical inspections and undercut companies that adhere to ethical standards.

- Earlier this year, Senator Blackburn sent a [letter](#) to U.S. Treasury Department Secretary Janet Yellen raising concerns about the Biden-Harris administration’s failure to fully enforce the *Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act* (UFLPA).
- In addition, criminals are using the de minimis process to smuggle drugs like fentanyl and its precursor chemicals into the United States, avoiding detection by shipping small packages and fueling the ongoing opioid crisis.
- In 2023 alone, CBP seized over [27,000](#) pounds of fentanyl – enough to kill over 6 billion people – yet many de minimis shipments go uninspected, allowing dangerous drugs to slip through undetected.
- Counterfeit goods are also being imported through the de minimis process, stealing the innovative work of American businesses and endangering consumers with dangerous products like faulty electronics, fake pharmaceuticals, and substandard automotive parts.

DENIED ACT

- The ***DENIED Act*** would empower CBP to establish a new “Denied Parties List,” barring foreign companies that repeatedly aid or facilitate the import of forced-labor products, counterfeit goods, or illegal drugs from leveraging the de minimis process. This safeguard ensures that bad actors can no longer dodge inspections to flood the market with dangerous and unethical products.
- The Treasury Secretary would be required to publish the Denied Parties List every 90 days, exposing companies banned from duty-free entry and detailing the reasons for their ban.
- Entities added to the Denied Parties List would also be referred to the UFLPA Task Force, strengthening coordination among enforcement agencies and reaffirming America’s commitment to combating forced labor in China and around the world.
- CBP, in coordination with the United States Postal Service, would be authorized to enhance data collection on de minimis imports, providing law enforcement with the tools they need to better target and crack down on unauthorized imports.
- This legislation would also empower CBP to impose steep fines on violators, starting at \$1,000 for the first offense and rising to \$5,000 for repeat offenses, ensuring there are real consequences for breaking the law and deterring future abuses.

ENDORSEMENTS

This legislation is endorsed by **Shatterproof**, the **Uyghur Human Rights Project**, the **Campaign for Uyghurs**, and the **Citizen Power Initiatives for China**.

“Shatterproof, a national nonprofit leading the fight against our nation’s addiction crisis, is grateful to

Senators Blackburn and Ossoff for introducing the DENIED Act,” **said Kevin Roy, Chief Public Policy Officer of Shatterproof.** “Fentanyl-related deaths demand immediate action to stop the flow of fentanyl and other illicit drugs into our country. This legislation enhances CBP’s capacity to combat illegal imports by closing smuggling loopholes and barring violators, including those trafficking fentanyl, from exploiting duty-free exemptions. Shatterproof calls on Congressional leadership to prioritize this critical issue.”

“Companies profiting from Uyghur forced labor are now on notice: you will be barred from direct-shipping access to U.S. consumers. Uyghurs are deeply grateful to Senator Marsha Blackburn and Senator Jon Ossoff for this important bipartisan bill to stop complicity in the atrocities against our people,” **said Omer Kanat, Executive Director, Uyghur Human Rights Project.**

“The proposed measures to establish a ‘Denied Parties List’ and combat forced labor and unethical practices are critical steps in ensuring accountability and protecting the integrity of global supply chains. CFU would be honored to provide an endorsement for this initiative. We believe this Act not only strengthens safeguards against forced labor but also underscores the United States’ commitment to upholding human rights and ethical business practices,” **said Rushan Abbas, Executive Director of Campaign for Uyghurs.**

“I strongly endorse the DENIED Act authored by Senator Masha Blackburn (R, Tennessee) and Senator Jon Ossoff (D, Georgia). The Act is a crucial step toward safeguarding both human rights in China and American markets. By closing loopholes in the de minimis entry process, this bill ensures that importers who engage in unethical practices—especially the use of forced labor—cannot bypass critical inspections. The establishment of the Denied Parties List, paired with steep fines and accountability measures, sends a powerful message: America will not tolerate the exploitation of vulnerable populations or the undermining of ethical businesses. Strengthening our commitment to human dignity and a fair global trade system, the DENIED Act sets a good example of bi-partisan effort to help advance human rights in China while defending our American values and interests,” **said Dr. Jianli (Doc) Yang, Founder and President, Citizen Power Initiatives for China.**

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