Good morning,

My name is Joe Jones and I am Projects Director for the American Committee on Africa. On behalf of ACOA I would like to thank the Co-Chairs and members of the committee for giving us this opportunity to speak in favor of the state selective purchasing bill that is under consideration today.

As some of you may know, ACOA is the oldest anti-apartheid organization in the U.S. and has had a particular focus on divestment and the movement to isolate South Africa for a large part of its history. In fact, ACOA was part of the effort that resulted in the passage of the Massachusetts divestment bill back in 1982.

Needless to say it is great to be here in Massachusetts where one of the very first comprehensive divestment bills was passed and to see that Massachusetts is going to be in the forefront of the movement for state selective purchasing as well.

As you know, there has been a tremendous amount of South Africa related legislation since the Massachusetts bill passed. States like California, New Jersey, Minnesota, Michigan, Colorado, Connecticut and many others have adopted policies that prohibit investing or banking with firms that are doing business in or with South Africa. In all there are now 19 states that have moved to cut their ties to apartheid.
And even though Massachusetts will be the first state to adopt a comprehensive policy of not contracting with companies that are involved in South Africa, it is important to note that nine of the ten largest cities in the country have already put selective purchasing policies in place. Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco have all passed legislation that curtail their purchases from companies that are doing business with South Africa. In September of last year The New York Times went so far as to credit selective purchasing legislation with being a driving force behind the withdrawal of many companies from South Africa.

We at ACOA have been in touch with most of these cities and it is clear that their actions have had a direct effect on the behavior of companies that do business in South Africa. For example, when the Bell & Howell corporation decided to cut all ties to apartheid they specifically cited the boycott of their products that was being waged by cities around the country. The fact that so many of the nation's largest cities have passed and implemented selective purchasing laws shows that it is a policy that can be put into place without putting an undue hardship on contracting policy.

On a national level, the effects of divestment and selective purchasing actions have been profound. Throughout the debate on sanctions that took place last summer, the legislators felt the pressure of having to face their constituents who had been pushing actions on the state and local level. The Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Richard Lugar told us that each time he
returned to Richmond Indiana for a basketball game he had to explain why he wasn't out front in supporting sanctions. This is a good example of the type of pressure that Congress was under as a result of local anti-apartheid actions, and explains why even conservative members of Congress were forced to support the mild sanctions that passed last year.

Questions are often raised about the efficacy of targeting corporations as a way to put pressure on the apartheid government. It is important that we are clear that the support, both economic and technological that has been rendered to apartheid as a result of foreign investment has been critical to the continuance of the apartheid state as we know it. It has been as a response to the wishes of those who are in South Africa fighting against apartheid that the campaign for divestment and sanctions has been waged.

In talking with a representative of the National Union of Mineworkers of South Africa a few weeks ago I asked what South African mineworkers were thinking about divestment and selective purchasing as a way of pressuring the apartheid regime. He told me that the NUM supported these actions and did so on the basis of a poll of rank and file workers who, when asked about economic pressure, replied that they saw no other international action that had been as effective.

While the ultimate demise of apartheid will be brought about by Black South Africans as they struggle to break the chains of minority rule, the support that we are able to lend to their efforts is and will continue to be key. It is in this context that we must look at the legislation that is before the committee today. Selective
purchasing has been an effective means of getting U.S. companies to cut their links to apartheid and passage of this bill in Massachusetts will mark a new phase in the power that selective purchasing can bring to bear on those companies that are supporting minority rule in South Africa.

I thank you for your attention.