

Leber Jeweler calls on US Congress to ban the importation of gemstones mined in Burma

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Leber Jeweler Inc. has written letters to several key members of US Congress requesting they take immediate steps to prohibit the importation of gemstones mined in Burma into the United States. While the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 specifically states that "no article may be imported into the United States that is produced, mined, manufactured, grown, or assembled in Burma", current US Customs regulations allow for Burmese gemstones to be imported into the United States.

Gemstones are Burma's third largest export, officially listed at close to \$300 million USD. Burma produces a wide range of colored gemstones, with over 90% of the world's rubies originating in this country. At present, the Burmese military government holds a majority share in every gemstone mining project, issues all relevant licenses and permits, as well as runs the gem auctions held in Rangoon.

The letter formally requests "all members of Congress to work to prohibit the importation of any gemstones mined in Burma. Doing so will deprive the regime of much needed cash and will strengthen the efforts that we all hope will one day lead to a free and democratic nation of Burma."

As part of Leber Jeweler Inc's goal of advocating on behalf of a range of human rights and environmental issues facing the jewelry trade, in 2002 the company implemented a policy of not purchasing any gemstones known to have originated in Burma.

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