



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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May 19, 2006

### **FLA Executive Director Rut Tufts Dies Following a Fall**

Rutledge Tufts, 59, executive director of the Fair Labor Association since 2003 and previously a senior administrator at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, died on May 16 from severe head injuries that resulted from a fall as he was entering his Washington, D.C. apartment on the evening of May 10. He died peacefully with his family and friends at his side.

“We are greatly saddened, and our deepest sympathy goes out to Rut’s family,” said FLA President Aurret van Heerden. “Rut made enormous contributions to the FLA at two stages of its evolution: at the very beginning of the organization when he helped create a key role for colleges and universities, and more recently through the steady leadership he provided as executive director. The FLA is a much stronger and more effective organization because of Rut’s dedication to it and to the goals that mattered so deeply to him: ensuring fair treatment for workers, protecting their rights and improving conditions in factories around the world.”

A native of Atlanta, Tufts received his undergraduate degree from Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee, and his master’s from Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. In 1972 he began a 31-year career at UNC, during which he had responsibility for UNC’s student stores, a variety of university services (printing, dining, vending, laundry), and trademark licensing. In 1990 he became director of auxiliary services, a position that gave him senior responsibility for a range of issues related to the university’s trademarks and licensing programs (one of the most successful in the country) and for its efforts to improve factory conditions where goods bearing UNC’s logo were produced. In 1998, Tufts was one of two employees to receive the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence, and in 2001 he received the Massey Award, the university’s top award for service.

He leaves his wife, Clare Jackson Tufts, of Durham, NC, and two sons, Willy Tufts of Cary, NC., and Jackson Tufts of Durham; his mother, Mimi Tufts of Athens, GA., a sister, Melissa Tufts of Comer, GA., and a brother, Mitchell Tufts, of Reno, NV. A

memorial service will be held in Chapel Hill, NC, at a date to be set. Contributions in his memory may be sent to Heifer Project International, PO Box 8058, Little Rock, AR 72203; the Chapel of the Cross, 304 East Franklin St., Chapel Hill, NC 27514; or the Student Conservation Association, PO Box 550, Charlestown, NH 03603-0550.

As early as 1996, Tufts began to work on ways to modify UNC's contractual relations with licensees to address growing concerns about working conditions in factories. In 1998 he was named co-chair of a Task Force for Labor Codes in Licensing that sought to develop a university-wide consensus on how best to ensure that merchandise was manufactured under fair working conditions. He helped develop the Collegiate Licensing Code, and during the winter and spring of 1999 he played a leadership role in bringing colleges and universities into the FLA and creating a University Advisory Council that he co-chaired from June 2000 through June 2002. In October 2001 he joined the FLA's board of directors and became chair of the board's audit committee. In his capacity as audit committee chair, he played an instrumental role in overseeing the FLA's budgeting, planning and financial management. He also served as the university representative on the FLA's monitoring standards committee.

Tufts also helped develop the governance structure and monitoring protocols of the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) while serving on its board of governors. In his work for UNC, the FLA, and the WRC he visited factories and met with workers, management, NGOs and government leaders in China, Thailand, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia and the United States.

In December 2003, the FLA changed van Heerden's position from executive director to president and Tufts was named executive director. In this capacity he oversaw the day-to-day operations of the organization, provided direction for the FLA's dedicated and talented staff, and represented the FLA in meetings with its many governmental, company, NGO and university constituencies. For the past year he helped guide the FLA through a major strategic planning process and he served as the FLA's principal liaison to the Joint Initiative on Corporate Accountability and Workers' Rights (Jo-In), an international collaborative effort among six multi-stakeholder organizations to increase cooperation and effectiveness in improving working conditions in global supply chains.

"From his role in shaping the nature and priorities of the FLA in its earliest days to his enormous dedication as its executive director these past two and a half years, Rut helped turn a unique and promising idea into an organization that brings together 20 companies, 194 colleges and universities, a broad range of NGOs, some 2,000 licensees, and other constituencies in an effort to protect workers' rights and improve working conditions around the world," said Adele Simmons, chair of the FLA board of directors. "Rut was a skilled and resourceful manager who provided steady leadership for a young and maturing organization; he was widely respected for his commitments to integrity, transparency, and candor; and, most importantly, he was a kind, thoughtful, and generous person who cared deeply about the people with whom he worked and the goals for which he worked so hard. We will miss him greatly."

