Senator Roger Wicker
United States International Trade Commission
Hearing on the Final Phase of Investigation No. 731-TA-1163
Woven Electric Blankets from China
June 29, 2010

Madame Chair, Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, good morning and thank you for affording me the opportunity to appear before you today in support of Sunbeam Corporation and their petition for anti-dumping duties on unfair imports of woven electric blankets from China.

Sunbeam Corporation is one of the largest employers in Waynesboro, Mississippi, and has been a fixture in Wayne County for over 50 years. After an unfortunate round of recent layoffs caused by the unfair imports, the Sunbeam facility employs 325 full-time and 40 part-time or seasonal employees. Sunbeam also employs 70 people at its facility in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, that provides support to the Waynesboro facility.

Sunbeam provides excellent wages, health benefits, and profit-sharing to their employees and helps sustain the local economy and well-being of many Mississippians. It also is important to note that in these difficult economic times Sunbeam and its employees have continued to provide generous charitable donations to local community groups such as the Wayne County Library, the local chapter of the American Cancer Society, and a local domestic abuse center.

The manufacturing of most consumer home products such as electric blankets has been moved off-shore to take advantage of low-cost labor and reduced government regulation, but until recently, Sunbeam has been able to continue competitively manufacturing woven electric blankets in Mississippi. The Sunbeam plant in Waynesboro has been able to compete in the global marketplace largely due to the skill and ingenuity of the workers and the company's commitment to those workers and the community.

I am here today on behalf of those Sunbeam workers. Low-cost Chinese imports are threatening Sunbeam's ability to continue competitively manufacturing electric blankets in Waynesboro, and it is likely these unfair practices will result in more layoffs or potentially closure of the facility.

I appreciate the International Trade Commission's thorough investigation of this matter and the unanimous preliminary determination that dumped imports from China have materially injured the United States woven electric blanket industry. The Commission's decision was based on its findings that still stand today. Increasing quantities of dumped woven electric blankets from China have caused the industry to lose sales and profits, which has in turn required Sunbeam to scale back its production and employment in Waynesboro.

Madam Chair and Commissioners, I hope my presence here today re-enforces the urgency of this matter for Mississippi, Wayne County, and Sunbeam. The Sunbeam workers in Mississippi are not afraid of competition, but that competition must be fair and in accordance with the laws of the United States. I encourage you to level the playing field for the U.S. woven electric industry and impose appropriate anti-dumping duties on the Chinese imports. The economic well-being of Sunbeam's Mississippi employees, their families, and other local small businesses that rely on Sunbeam deserve fair treatment and the chance to compete.

I thank you again for your attention to this issue and for allowing me to speak to you today.