

'Made in USA' may be redefined

By Dan Nakaso, San Jose Mercury News

It seems simple enough: To be labeled as "Made in America," a product sold in California must include only components manufactured and assembled in this nation.

But that's a tougher standard than elsewhere in the country, where small amounts of foreign parts don't invalidate the label. And now it's touched off a debate among business interests and consumer rights groups, as state lawmakers consider lowering the threshold included in the state's 52-year-old labeling law.

Richard Russell, chairman of the board of Russell's Furniture, is opening a new store in San Mateo on Feb. 1 that he originally planned to call "Made in America."

But he changed the name to "Russell's Furniture American Pride/Bringing Jobs Back Home" after his suppliers – including Amish craftspeople from Ohio – could not guarantee that every single component originated in America, which would meet the California standard for labeling a product Made in America.

The idea of watering down California's standard bothers Richard Holober, executive director of the Consumer Federation of California, which opposed an earlier draft of the bill that would have allowed products to carry a "Made in America" label if 90 percent of the parts were made and assembled in the United States.

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