



**Remarks as Prepared for Delivery
Bill Simon, President and CEO, Walmart U.S.
American Legion National Convention
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I know you're probably wondering why the CEO of Walmart U.S. would be addressing you at your convention. I'm not a politician or interested in your support for anything in particular. But we have a unique view of America – through our customers' eyes. And I want to talk to you today, veteran to veteran, about how we get this country we love back on track and the critical role veterans can play.

When I was 22 years old, a brand new ensign in the US Navy, I reported for duty on the USS Moosbrugger in Charleston, South Carolina. The captain was a man named Don Dyer.

You can safely imagine I was nervous.

Now, Captain Dyer was a salty old sea captain. When I presented him with my orders, I was expecting a lecture. What I got was something completely different.

He sat me down. Looked me in the eye. And he said: "I trust you. Your country is counting on you. While you might make mistakes, we're all in this together. Now, go do your job."

What a feeling of confidence he gave me. A feeling that has stayed with me throughout my life and has been one of the enduring gifts from my service.

Many of you have similar stories. That confidence we all gained – in ourselves...in each other...in what we can all do together – that's what America needs right now.

State of the Country

My company, Walmart, is often called a microcosm of America. Let me tell you what we're seeing in our stores.

On the last day of each month, around 11 p.m., a crowd starts to gather. Young mothers and kids start to shop. They fill their carts full of food and formula and diapers, waiting around near checkout, until midnight, when their electronic benefits hit their cards. Electronic food stamps.

It will just break your heart. The only reason anyone shops for food and formula at midnight is to have something to feed her family in the morning.

Our customers are working so hard for their families. But this economy is just not working for them. They feel like their leaders aren't listening to them. And then things like this credit downgrade just bother them on a gut level.

You hear a lot of people say it's a really bad time for America.

But many of you have seen *bad*.

It may be rough today, but it's not Pearl Harbor bad. It's not 9/11 bad.

30 Americans – 17 of them Navy SEALs – making the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan, that's bad...a national tragedy. A credit downgrade? That's just a Wall Street opinion.

Veterans Can Help Lead the Way

Our problems are not acts of God or war; these are man-made problems. And we can solve them.

Now, who do I mean by *We*? I mean *We*, the people. In my case, I mean *We*, the business community, and I mean *We*, Walmart.

But I also mean: *We*, the people in this room. The veterans of America who stormed the beaches, and parachuted behind enemy lines, and stood watch on long, hot nights.

Everyone is hoping the cavalry will ride in and save the day. But you don't need to wait for that. Just think about our history. You *are* the cavalry.

After World War I, the doughboys came home, and we had the roar of the 1920s.

After World War II, the GIs led the longest economic boom in our history.

Today, after ten years of war, there's a new group of men and women ready to be a part of the next American renewal.

And I have so much confidence in this generation. When I signed up to serve, I knew combat was a possibility. But I recently took part in my nephew's commissioning ceremony; he'll be a helicopter pilot at Fort Rucker. For him, combat is not a possibility. It's his generation's reality.

He has seen his peers go on third, fourth, and fifth tours. And he still answered the call of duty.

They impress me so much. They're why I know we're going to be ok.

Our obligation is to create the conditions for their success, so that, as they come back, they can help lead us to a better day.

All About Jobs

This work of American renewal is all about jobs.

You know, we act like job creation is this big mystery. But we know how to create jobs – you hire someone. People with capital employ others in a productive way. It's not complicated.

Now is not the time to retreat. It's time to tackle our problems head on.

I run Walmart U.S. – a company founded by a veteran – and Walmart is helping tackle America's job problem.

Today, I'm pleased to announce that Walmart will open more than 100 new stores by the end of the year, with new opportunities for new associates. More than 15,000 people will be hired for these stores.

And we'll create more jobs by buying local products in these communities, like produce from local farmers.

We're not stopping there. In October, we'll announce new growth plans for next year. More stores. More jobs.

I'm proud of the jobs we create at Walmart. These are good jobs and good careers. Inside our stores every day, the American dream comes to life.

Last year, we promoted more than 140,000 hourly associates, which is like giving all of Dayton, Ohio, a promotion. More than 200,000 of Walmart's employees have been with the company more than ten years.

And here's one rumor about our benefits that's actually true: if you work for Walmart and your spouse in the military gets transferred, we will guarantee you a job in your new location.

You've heard a lot of people this week say unemployment among veterans is too high.

Well, it is. And we're doing something about it.

I'll just say it: we love to hire veterans. Veterans not only have a record of performance under pressure, but they are educated and technologically savvy; quick learners; and team players. It's difficult to fact-check, but we believe we're the largest private employer of veterans in the country.

I want to introduce you to one of them. Michelle Caraballo, who's here today, served as a captain in the Army. She went to Iraq as part of the "surge."

We didn't hire Michelle because she was a great retailer. We hired her because she is a proven leader. Today, she's a store manager in Streamwood, Illinois, with responsibility for almost 400 associates and a multi-million dollar business.

All the details on our veterans recruiting efforts are on our new website -- careerswithamission.com. There's even a cool feature that matches your military skills with jobs at Walmart you'd be good at.

One last thing: Walmart and the Walmart Foundation made a commitment last year of \$10 million over 5 years to promote job training and entrepreneurship among veterans. We're already on track to give \$5 million in the first year.

So I'm proud to announce today that we are doubling our commitment to veterans to \$20 million over five years.

National Agenda

So, we're not waiting on government or other businesses or anyone else. Frankly, if your business plan involves waiting on other people...I wish you all the best.

But I do believe there are a few things our leaders can do. These things won't save the day, but they sure could put the wind at our backs.

We can start by taking care of our veterans when they come home. That's our moral obligation, yes. And they have so much to offer this country.

Second, we need to promote American exports because more exports mean more jobs. There are a couple of free trade agreements that are ready. Let's pass them. Let's go.

Third, we need a comprehensive reform of our corporate tax code to broaden the tax base and lower the overall rate – and unleash America's job creators. Every tax break, every incentive needs to be on the table.

Finally, we can work together to bring back American manufacturing. Rising international labor costs and fuel prices have made it much more efficient to source products locally and create local jobs. We have a real opportunity here.

We at Walmart are talking to our suppliers as they make these decisions and seeing whether we can help tip the scales where it makes business sense. But revitalizing American manufacturing will take all of us working together – business, government, labor, and community leaders.

It won't be easy. Actually, it will be pretty hard. But it won't be Fallujah hard. And it all starts with believing we can do it.

Those Who Served

So that's what the business community and Walmart can do – and a couple things the government should do.

But what can those of us who served do together?

Let me tell you a story you can probably relate to.

In the spring of 1984, my ship sailed for home from the coast of Lebanon, in the wake of the horrible tragedy there. We stopped in Newport, Rhode Island, not far from my home town of Hartford, Connecticut.

This was in the days before cell phones. And I didn't tell my mom I was coming home. I just rented a car and drove.

To this day, I can remember exactly what it felt like to get out of the car in my dress whites and walk up to her house. I was so proud to serve my country.

I've never felt so good about myself – not before or since.

You all know that feeling. And that's why despite all the things that are happening in our country right now and that make us want to turn away: We love this country, and we believe in our future.

America is still the greatest nation on earth. It is still the most dynamic and the most free. This is still the best place to start a business. Still the best place to fall in love, raise a family, and grow old. Maybe have a few grandkids, if you're lucky.

So let's all remember that feeling – that pride – that certainty that our best days are ahead. That's what's going to get us through.

You are the Cavalry

So here's what you can do. First, we all need to commit to helping this new generation of heroes. They are facing some incredibly tough challenges.

We owe them that. But you know what? We're going to get back far more than we give. These are leaders with discipline, training, and a passion for service. There is a seriousness and sense of purpose that the military instills, and we need it today more than ever.

And whether you finished your service a few weeks ago or a few decades ago: we need you.

Second, go back to your community and tell them about the American Legion and everything you heard this week: Remind them why you served this great country. Remind them why you put on the uniform and said goodbye to your loved ones and traveled to faraway places. Why you got your orders and grabbed your weapon and looked our enemies in the eye. Remind them why you believed America was worth fighting for – and worth dying for – and why you still believe that today.

Pride, conviction and confidence are the first steps toward getting our economy growing again. And we don't need to wait on anybody else to do it. America's veterans can again lead the way.

You have already given so much. It's hard to ask anything more of you. But *you are the cavalry*.

And like Captain Dyer told that nervous, hopeful kid so many years ago: I trust you. Your country's counting on you. And we're all in this together.

Now, let's go do our job.

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