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-- Union Leader "Health Bills" Fail to Address Soaring Health Care Costs --

Singling Out Wal-Mart Serves Only to Further Special Interest Agenda

The AFL-CIO's intent to launch individual state legislative campaigns in support of health care measures targeting Wal-Mart is **less about health care and more about organizing Wal-Mart's 1.3 million associates**, more than three-fourths of whom have some form of health insurance. The AFL-CIO chooses to ignore the fact that every Wal-Mart associate -- both full-time and part-time -- can become eligible for health benefits. In some areas, associates can choose from among as many as eighteen health plans that cost as little as \$11 per month. As of Jan. 1, 2006, Wal-Mart insures more than 1 million people, making it one of the **largest providers of private-sector health insurance in the country**.

With their most recent attack, Washington, D.C. union leaders ignore the fact that there is a larger health care problem in this country that needs to be addressed. With 46 million uninsured individuals, it is clear that the union leadership's campaign against Wal-Mart is an **attempt to score political points**, not to address the real health care challenges facing America's working families.

- In May 2004, Stewart Acuff, organizing director of the AFL-CIO, put it bluntly: **"If we want to survive, labor has no choice but to organize Wal-Mart."** (*Fortune*, 5/17/04; emphasis added) Accordingly, **the AFL-CIO**, led by affiliate unions such as Service Employees International and the United Food and Commercial Workers, **planned to spend \$25 million on its anti-Wal-Mart efforts in 2005, "more than what has been spent against any single company."** (*Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*, 1/26/05; emphasis added)
- Building toward its long-term goal of organizing Wal-Mart's workforce, **"the AFL-CIO intends to exploit Wal-Mart's image problems** to drive away some business...[.]" Thundered AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard L. Trumka: **"This will be an effort by the entire labor movement."** (*Business Week*, 2/7/05; emphasis added)
- **"To fight a giant like Wal-Mart, you need all your strength,"** AFL-CIO Organizing Director Stewart Acuff pleaded. (*Sacramento Bee*, 7/31/05; emphasis added)
- Staring his federation's growing challenges square in the face, **"Sweeney also said the AFL-CIO waited too long to try to organize Wal-Mart workers** and now faces a giant company with giant clout....**We're confident that we are going to be able to organize Wal-Mart,"** he said. (*Akron Beacon-Journal*, 11/22/05; emphasis added)

Clearly, the AFL-CIO's campaign on health care seeks to model itself after **flawed legislation in Maryland**. There, the General Assembly is set to vote this month on whether to override Gov. Ehrlich's veto of *The Maryland Fair Share Health Care Bill*, a bill that is neither "fair" nor a "health care" bill. With **786,000 uninsured Marylanders and just 17,000 Wal-Mart associates** in Maryland, one wonders why organized labor would be so supportive of a bill that would have virtually no impact on so many in need. The *Maryland Fair Share Health Care Bill* does **nothing to address the enormous number of uninsured individuals** in the state of Maryland or the soaring cost of health care.



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Newspapers across the state acknowledge that the Maryland legislation was intended to target only Wal-Mart. And the transparency of potential forthcoming bills in other states will be as widely reported.

- **“The legislation has been called the Wal-Mart Bill because the retailing giant is the only entity it would affect.”** (*The Daily Record*, 01/04/06; emphasis added)
- **“The measure would affect one corporation, retailing behemoth Wal-Mart Stores Inc....”** (*The Baltimore Sun*, 04/06/05; emphasis added)
- **“Many senators accused backers of the bill of crafting it just to affect...Wal-Mart.”** (*The Capital [Annapolis]*, 04/06/05; emphasis added)
- **“...the bill is what we call in Annapolis a ‘redheaded Eskimo’ right now. It affects only one company, as you say. It affects Wal-Mart. And no one really backs away from the fact that this bill does target Wal-Mart.”** (David Nitkin, Statehouse bureau chief of *The Baltimore Sun*, on National Public Radio, “*Talk of the Nation*,” 04/06/05; emphasis added)
- **“A proposed Maryland law that attempts to pressure Wal-Mart to provide better health care benefits for its employees would violate federal law, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce says.”** (*Associated Press*, 01/04/06; emphasis added)
- **“The legislation results from a nationwide campaign by the Service Employees International Union, the United Food and Commercial Workers and their political allies to unionize Wal-Mart employees (and to depict Wal-Mart as an evil union-buster for trying to persuade its employees not to join unions). Wal-Mart is the only company in the state that would be affected by the legislation.”** (*The Washington Times*, editorial, 01/03/06; emphasis added)

The attempt by the AFL-CIO will fail, because their motives are transparent, because the American people know that the health care challenges facing Wal-Mart are facing all large employers, and because voters will demand that their elected leaders **set aside partisan politics** and instead focus on **working together to find real solutions**, not supporting special interest favors.

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