

## **STATE LEGISLATORS TAKE ACTION**

### **Call on Wal-Mart to Change**

In June you received a letter from Wal-Mart Watch letting you know about just some of the steps being taken by legislators all across this country to hold Wal-Mart accountable for the “Wal-Mart Tax” they impose on our communities. We received an overwhelming response from nearly 1,000 elected officials – sharing their efforts, requesting additional information. Wal-Mart Watch has responded with new disturbing data revealed week after week that has resulted in a growing wave of concern across this country and new momentum behind legislative efforts in several states. In 10 states, legislation has been introduced that would require companies like Wal-Mart to disclose how many of their employees are on public health care benefits. In twenty-four states, “fair share” health care bills have been introduced to require companies like Wal-Mart to reimburse states for expenses it shifts to taxpayers.

Just take a look at what some of your fellow legislators have had to say on the subject:

- **Speaker of the House Bruce Newcomb (R-Idaho):** “Wal-Mart's blowing people out of the water, and if they're doing that by having the public sector subsidize their health care, that's wrong,” Rep. Newcomb said. “That's really wrong.” [Idaho Statesman, 6/29/05]
- **Rep. Mary Flowers (D-Illinois):** “If they don't want to be embarrassed, they can do something about it,” Rep. Flowers said. “But you tell me, why is it that the taxpayers of the state of Illinois are funding the richest company in the nation?” [Chicago Sun-Times, 6/8/05]
- **Sen. Gloria G. Lawlah (D-Maryland):** The Maryland General Assembly passed legislation that requires companies with at least 10,000 employees to spend 8 percent of their payroll on worker health care or pay the shortfall into a state fund. “Employers that can afford health coverage but don't offer it, or offer skimpy benefits or set costs at rates that workers can't afford, get ‘a free ride,’” Sen. Gloria Lawlah, the bill's sponsor, said. [Baltimore Sun, 3/3/05; Baltimore Sun, 5/7/05]
- **Senate Majority Leader Robert Clegg (R-New Hampshire):** In reaction to the news that Wal-Mart employees topped the state's list of workers relying on the publicly funded Healthy Kids program the Associated Press reported, “Clegg, a conservative Republican, believes businesses are shirking their responsibility to provide health care because they know taxpayers will pick up the tab. ‘Business has looked at it as a method of reducing overhead,’ he said.” [Associated Press, 5/15/05]
- **Sen. Tim Burchett (R- Tennessee):** At a town hall meeting debating a crisis in Tennessee's Medicaid program (TennCare) State Sen. Tim Burchett said of Wal-Mart, “A large percentage of their [Wal-Mart's] employees are on TennCare and I'd like to see them use some of their profits to support some of their people, and things like that.” [http://www.wate.com]
- **Rep. Steve Conway (D-Washington):** “Why should they be shifting their health care responsibilities to the state?” asked Rep. Steve Conway, D-Tacoma. “The employers are not really stepping up.” [Associated Press, 2/28/03]

**WHO IS WAL-MART WATCH?** Wal-Mart Watch is an independent non-profit with a wide breadth of support. Based in Washington DC, we are proud partners with corporations, small business owners, clergy, elected officials—like you, community organizations, environmental groups, and citizens throughout our country who are troubled by Wal-Mart's business practices. As a strategic resource center, we work closely with organizations nationwide that have years of experience in developing innovative policy proposals to set new standards for corporate behavior.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?** If you are interested in learning more about the “Wal-Mart tax” and how you as a legislator can do something about it, please join us at a meeting to discuss this subject with your colleagues, Wal-Mart Watch Executive Director Andy Grossman and Wal-Mart Watch Director of Strategic Outreach, David Nassar.

**Thursday, August 18<sup>th</sup> 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM**  
**Seattle Westin Hotel, Olympic Room**  
**1900 Fifth Ave. Seattle, WA**

# WAL\*MARTWATCH

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