



WAL-MART'S STALLED GLBT POLICIES



A Timeline of Wal-Mart's Policies Regarding Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Employees

July 2003 • Wal-Mart expanded its workplace anti-discrimination policy to include sexual orientation.¹

January 2005 • Wal-Mart recognized same-sex couples as families when required to do so under state law.² However, Wal-Mart did not extend this recognition beyond states where it was not legally required to do so.

August 2006 • Wal-Mart joined the Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce with Dee Breazeale serving on their corporate advisory committee.³

October 2006 • Dee Breazeale departed Wal-Mart under controversy. She was known for leading the outreach effort to the GLBT community and pushing for more inclusive sexual orientation and gender identity policies within the company.⁴ Wal-Mart continued its partnership with the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce.

June 2007 • Wal-Mart retracts support for GLBT organizations in response to conservative critics. Stating that Wal-Mart does not make contributions to “support or oppose highly controversial issues”, Wal-Mart discontinues contributions to GLBT groups.⁵

Remaining Problems

No Same-Sex Partnership Benefits

Wal-Mart remains one of the few national retailers that do not extend health care and other benefits to same-sex domestic partners. Wal-Mart's major competitors including Target, Best Buy, Costco, Federated Department Stores (Macy's), Walgreen's and Sears Holding Corporation (Sears/K-Mart) all offer domestic partnership benefits.⁶

No Transgender Non-Discrimination Policy

Wal-Mart has yet to expand its non-discrimination policy to include gender identity.⁷ Transgender individuals frequently face violence, harassment and termination on the job and are one of the most frequent targets of discrimination currently in the United States. Lack of a clearly stated non-discrimination policy including gender identity potentially creates a hostile work environment where-



by other types of discrimination and harassment are tolerated. Many other major retailers including Costco, Walgreens, Best Buy, Staples, Borders and Sears Holding Corporation (Sears/K-Mart) have non-discrimination policies that include gender identity. In addition, Wal-Mart does not include gender identity in its diversity training.⁸ Wal-Mart's lack of clear policies regarding transgender individuals may also lead to a violation of non-discrimination laws in states that have protections in place regarding gender identity, including California, New York, and Illinois.⁹

No Corporate Leadership

While Wal-Mart is the largest corporation in America, they have yet to reach the same standards regarding GLBT issues as its competitors and the majority of the Fortune 500. Currently, 388 Fortune 500 companies offer domestic partnership benefits and 138 of the Fortune 500, including Microsoft, IBM, Sears Holding Corporation, Best Buy, Walgreens and Coca-Cola have taken a leadership position by having comprehensive GLBT policies in place.¹⁰ These policies include providing domestic partnership benefits, having comprehensive discrimination policies, and including diversity training for both sexual orientation and gender identity. Thus far, Wal-Mart's policies toward the GLBT community lack substance and it has yet to provide its employees and potential employees with a truly inclusive workplace. Wal-Mart has a 65 rating out of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index, so there is significant room for improvement.¹¹ Wal-Mart once again fails to lead – this time on an issue which would create a more tolerant and inclusive workplace throughout America.

Endnotes

- 1 "Wal-Mart Validates Gay Workers" AP/CBS, 2 July 2003
- 2 Newscenter Staff, "Wal-Mart Recognizes Gay Families" 365Gay.com, 27 January 2005
- 3 "Wal-Mart launches gay friendly initiative" gay.com, 21 August 2006
- 4 "Wal-Mart Exec Departs Amid Controversy" Associated Press, 16 October 2006
- 5 Marc Gunther, "Plugged In: Wal-Mart shuns gay groups", *Fortune*, June 22, 2007
- 6 Corporate Equality Index 2006, Human Rights Campaign, September 2006
- 7 http://www.hrc.org/buyersguide/Where_to_Shop.asp
- 8 http://www.hrc.org/buyersguide/Where_to_Shop.asp
- 9 <http://nctequality.org/default.asp>
- 10 Corporate Equality Index 2006, Human Rights Campaign, September 2006
- 11 http://www.hrc.org/buyersguide/Where_to_Shop.asp