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## **KENNEDY LAUNCHES ANTI-WAL-MART AGENDA**

### ***SUPPORTS NEW GRASS ROOTS DOCUMENTARY ON THE HIGH COST OF LOW PRICE***

WASHINGTON – Today Senator Kennedy and Representative DeLauro joined filmmaker, Robert Greenwald, and the Co-Director of the Campaign for America's Future Robert Borosage to discuss the impact of the Wal-Mart economy as detailed in a new film called *WAL-MART: The High Cost of Low Price*. Senator Kennedy detailed their efforts in Congress to improve the working conditions of WAL-MART employees and low-wage workers across the country. He heard firsthand about the devastating impact of Wal-Mart on communities from Red Ery, the owner of four family-run grocery stores that were put out of business by WAL-MART.

“Wal-Mart sells itself as the all-American company, but it violates American family values every single day by mistreating its workers. Low cost does not have to mean low wages and low respect for workers.” Senator Kennedy said. “The Wal-Marts of the world must be held accountable for its workers, families and communities. This is not just a Congressional fight – it is an American fight that we should all join in. I applaud the community groups and religious leaders who are promoting awareness of Wal-Mart's abuses by gathering together in neighborhoods and houses of worship throughout the country.”

Senator Kennedy and Representative DeLauro are both sponsoring several initiatives to promote good corporate citizenship. And Kennedy has sponsored legislation that would keep consumers informed about bad corporate practices by requiring companies to publicly report the number of their employees that must rely on publicly-funded health care.

The film, which takes viewers on a personal journey into the everyday lives of families struggling to fight against Wal-Mart, is being shown at 7000 screenings across the country at house parties, churches and community centers next week. It premieres in Washington this evening. Those who watch the film are mobilized to take legislative action in support of the efforts that Kennedy and DeLauro are advocating, listed below:

### **WE CAN DO BETTER FOR WORKING FAMILIES!**

*What can you do to stop Wal-Mart's shameful tactics?  
Ask your Senators and Representatives to support these bills:*

· **The Employee Free Choice Act (S. 842/H.R. 1696).** The Employee Free Choice Act will help to create an atmosphere where workers can choose a union free from employer coercion. This bill would protect the right of workers to choose a union, provide for binding arbitration when an employer refuses to reach a first contract, and strengthen the penalties in current law for

mistreatment of workers that support a union.

- **Health Care Accountability Act (S. 1286/H.R. 3432).** The Health Care Accountability Act shines a light on the corporations that are costing taxpayers by refusing to provide health care benefits to employees. This bill would require states to produce an annual report that lists by company the number of employees who rely on publicly-funded health care, and the cost to state taxpayers of providing this coverage.

- **The Safe at Work Act (H.R. 4190).** The Safe at Work Act preserves the effective enforcement of our nation's child labor laws by preventing the Department of Labor from agreeing to give advance notice to a company before conducting an investigation for any wage and hour violations, including child labor law violations. In a recent, unprecedented agreement criticized by the Department's own Inspector General, the Department agreed to give Wal-Mart 15 days advance notice of any audits or investigations, undermining effective labor law enforcement.

- **Protecting Americas Workers Act (S. 944/H.R. 2004).** The Protecting America's Workers Act honors the memory of workers who have died in the workplace by strengthening protections for workers. The bill would provide meaningful penalties when workers are killed or seriously injured because of an employer's willful violations of our health and safety laws, protect the public's right to know about violations by employers, protect whistleblowers who report safety violations, and give federal and state employees the same health and safety protections as other workers.

□□□□□**The Paycheck Fairness Act (S. 841/H.R. 1637).** The Paycheck Fairness Act gives victims of gender discrimination the equal pay they deserve. It strengthens penalties for equal pay violations, requires the Department of Labor to enhance outreach and training efforts to eliminate pay disparities, and prohibits employers from retaliating against employees who share salary information with co-workers.

- **The Healthy Families Act (S. 1085/H.R. 1902).** The Healthy Families Act ensures that millions of workers can take time off when they are sick, when they need an annual check-up, when their children are sick, or when their ailing elderly parents need to be taken to the doctor. This bill would guarantee seven paid sick days so that workers can address medical needs and care for family members without fear of losing their jobs.

- **The Fair Minimum Wage Act (S. 1062/H.R. 2429).** The Fair Minimum Wage Act gives hardworking Americans a long overdue pay raise by increasing the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour. This increase would directly benefit seven and a half million workers.

### **Statement of Senator Edward Kennedy on the Wal-Mart Movie**

November 15, 2005  
(As Prepared for Delivery)

Wal-Mart sells itself as the all-American company, but it violates American family values every single day. Wal-Mart refuses to sell magazines, books, or CDs that it believes will offend the values of average Americans. But what Wal-Mart's leaders can't seem to grasp is that average Americans are offended by its shameful tactics to boost profits at the expense of the families of hard-working men and women.

Wal-Mart has forced employees to work overtime without pay. They have hired professional union busters to keep employees from having a voice at work. They have refused to provide affordable health care, while instructing workers to apply for Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program. They have refused to promote women and people of color. They have violated child labor laws by requiring kids to use dangerous equipment. And they have used predatory pricing practices to put small companies out of business.

Surely, the largest company in the world, which made more than \$10 billion in profits last year, can do better by its workers, better by our communities, and better for the American taxpayer.

Wal-Mart's founder, Sam Walton, was known for creating the "10 Commandments of Leadership." Well, today I join Representative Miller, Representative DeLauro, and Robert Greenwald to challenge Wal-Mart to abide by the Ten Commandments of Good Corporate Citizenship.

- Though shalt pay living wages.
- Though shalt provide affordable health care.
- Though shalt pay overtime.
- Though shalt not bust unions.
- Though shalt pay and promote women and men equally.
- Though shalt not discriminate against people of color.
- Though shalt not support sweatshops.
- Though shalt not violate child labor laws.
- Though shalt provide safe working conditions.
- Though shalt not dump toxic waste.

Companies that abide by these commandments succeed. One of Wal-Mart's chief competitors, Costco, is a shining example of good corporate citizenship. Its average pay is 76 percent higher than Wal-Mart's, and its employees have health insurance, dental, and retirement benefits. Yet it is Costco, not Wal-Mart, that has delivered higher returns to shareholders over the past decade.

Sam Walton was right when he said that a company's success depends on its values. And Wal-Mart's current CEO, H. Lee Scott, was right two weeks ago when he called for an increase in the minimum wage – even though his only reason for supporting it was so that Wal-Mart's minimum wage customers could buy more Wal-Mart products.

We are working hard in Congress to make the Wal-Marts of the world accountable to workers, families and communities. We have introduced legislation to expose Wal-Mart's practice of dumping responsibility for health care for its employers on the American taxpayer. We have introduced the Employee Free Choice Act to give workers a voice at work and to stop anti-union intimidation tactics. We continue to fight for an increase in the minimum wage, to ensure that no one who works for a living lives in poverty. We have sponsored legislation to ensure equal pay for men and women. And we are increasing penalties against companies with dangerous working conditions.

But this is not just a Congressional fight. The American people are also demanding accountability. I applaud the efforts of Robert Greenwald and the brave workers who have come forward in his film to tell their stories. And I applaud the community groups and religious leaders who are promoting awareness of Wal-Mart's abuses in neighborhoods and houses of worship throughout the country. The time has come to demand more than low prices from America's largest employer.

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