

# Walmart Political Giving: Washington State Profile

## Overview

With over 4,300 stores across the country, Walmart and the Walton family also actively influence politics at the state level. In 2010 alone, the company and members of the Walton family nationally made contributions in state races totaling over \$2.9 million. From 2005 to 2010, the company employed 325 lobbyists across 49 states.<sup>1</sup> Analysis suggests that this activity very often undermines the interests of Walmart's consumers, its Associates, and working families throughout the country.

## Walmart State-Level Political Giving in Washington State

Between 2003 and 2010, Walmart gave \$437,715 to state-level candidates, committees and ballot initiatives in Washington State. The majority of funding went to Republicans, who received \$292,990 over this period -- 66% of total contributions. And Democrats received \$103,125 million – 23% percent of the total.

In September 2010 Walmart contributed \$40,000 to Modernize Washington<sup>2</sup>, an advocacy group formed to support the ballot initiative I-1100, also known as the Costco Initiative. I-1100 would have closed state liquor stores and authorized the sale, distribution and importation of liquor by private parties, but the measure was defeated on the Nov 2<sup>nd</sup> ballot by nearly 6%.<sup>3</sup>

Of the Walton heirs, only Jim Walton has contributed to a state race in Washington: in 2008 he gave \$100 to Washington State House candidate Richard Debolt (R), who went on to win the 20<sup>th</sup> District seat.

## Walmart Lobbying in Washington State

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<sup>1</sup> Lobbying summary figures from the Center for Money in State Politics

<sup>2</sup> Followthemoney.org, Contributor Reports, accessed 20 May 2011

<sup>3</sup> Ballotpedia.org, Washington Privatize Liquor Distribution, Initiative 1100 (2010), accessed 20 May 2011

According to the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission, Walmart paid a reported \$790,535 to five lobbyists/firms in the state of Washington between 2007 and 2010:

### **Walmart Lobbyist Spending 2007-10**

Lobbyist	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
Karianne Fallow	-	-	\$79,359	\$20,841	\$100,200
Gano and Associates	\$72,000	\$72,422	\$82,414	\$80,962	\$314,448
Jennifer Holder	\$74,688	-	-	-	\$74,688
Jennifer Spall	-	\$163,950	\$28,220	\$109,029	\$301,199
Total	\$146,688	\$236,372	\$189,993	\$210,832	\$790,535

### **Walmart PAC Giving to Federal Candidates from Washington State**

Between 2005 and 2010, Walmart's PAC<sup>4</sup> gave \$68,500 to U.S. House candidates from Washington. Most prominent among those, in terms of Walmart dollars, were Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Dave Reichert, to whom the company gave \$18,000 and \$30,000, respectively.

During her tenure, Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers has consistently opposed measures that were critical to the future of American working families, including Wall Street Reform, Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, the Food Safety Modernization Act and the Health Care Reform bill which Rep. McMorris Rodgers went so far as to call an "internal" terrorist attack in 2009.<sup>5</sup>

On the issue of terrorism, Congressman Reichert, who has accepted Walmart PAC money in each of the last three election cycles, voted against a bill to screen all of the cargo that comes into American ports while on the Homeland Security Committee.<sup>6</sup>

### **Walton Family Foundation's Ideological Giving**

According to its website, the Walton Family Foundation focuses its grant-giving to four areas: K-12 Education, Environment, Delta Region of Arkansas and Mississippi, and Northwest Arkansas. However, the organization has donated over \$2.3 million to right-wing think tanks over the last eight years, some of which have devoted substantial resources to promoting policies that favor large corporations at the expense of American working families.

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<sup>4</sup> Titled "Wal-Mart Stores Inc. PAC for Responsible Government"

<sup>5</sup> Jennifer Bendery, "McMorris Rodgers Calls Health Bill an 'Internal' Terrorist Attack", Roll Call, 3 Nov 2009

<sup>6</sup> HR 4954, Markey Amendment, Homeland Security Committee, 26 Apr 06

Since 2003, the Walton Family Foundation has contributed over \$1.4 million to the Institute for Justice and the Cato Institute, organizations founded and financed by billionaire brothers Charles and David Koch, whom Congresswoman Gwen Moore of Wisconsin aptly called “poster children of the effort by multinational corporate America to try to redefine the rights and values of American citizens.”<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the Cato Institute and the Institute for Justice may have been instrumental in *redefining the rights* of corporations to influence elections: The Cato Institute submitted an amicus brief to the 2010 *Citizens United* case calling for “unfettered” corporate “speech”, and the Institute for Justice submitted a brief claiming that campaign finance laws prohibiting unlimited corporate money “trump the First Amendment.”<sup>8</sup>

The Walton Family Foundation also contributed \$335,500 to the Americans for Tax Reform Foundation, a think tank run by Americans for Tax Reform, which has supported tax breaks for American-based corporations that ship jobs overseas.<sup>9</sup> And the Walton Family Foundation has contributed \$75,000 to the National Right to Work Legal Defense and Education Foundation, an anti-union non-profit based in Virginia. The Heartland Institute, to which the Walton Family Foundation has made three contributions totaling \$290,000 since 2003, has sought to limit government regulation on climate change.<sup>10</sup>

### **Walton Family State-Level Contributions, Nationwide**

Between 2005 and 2010, members of the Walton family nationally gave \$2,543,825 to state-level candidates and ballot initiatives, the majority of which (55.63% - \$1,415,000) went to Republicans. Democrats received a mere \$157,225 (6.18% of the total) over the same period. The remaining 38.19% (\$971,500) went to ballot initiatives and independent candidates.

The biggest contributor at the state-level was Alice Walton (\$808,850), daughter of Walmart founder Sam Walton and eighth on Forbes 2010 “Richest People” in America list with an estimated net worth of \$21.2 billion -- coming in behind brother Jim Walton, the Koch brothers, and sister Christy Walton & family.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Eric Lipton, “Billionaire Brothers' Money Plays Role in Wisconsin Budget Dispute”, New York Times, 22 Feb 2011

<sup>8</sup> Lee Fang, “Exclusive: David Koch Refuses to Answer Questions About *Citizens United*, Secret Right-Wing Meetings”, Think Progress, 6 Jan 2011

<sup>9</sup> On August 9, 2010 Americans for Tax Reform issued a “tax pledge alert” stating that support for H.R. 1586, which would eliminate tax breaks for some multinational corporations based in the United States that have operations abroad, is a violation of their Taxpayer Protection Pledge. Sources: Tax Reform, [8/9/10](#); Washington Post, [8/5/10](#); Washington Post, 6/9/10

<sup>10</sup> Jane Gross, “The New Old Age”, The New York Times Blog, 10 Mar 2009

<sup>11</sup> Forbes Staff, “The Forbes 400: The Richest People in America”, Forbes Magazine, 16 Sep 2010; Alice Walton net worth updated on Forbes’ website in March 2011