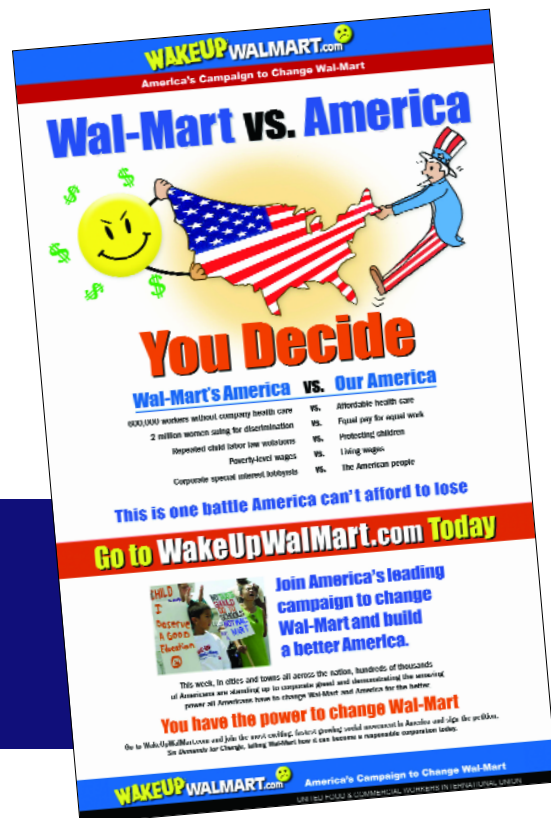


Wake Up Wal-Mart is a union-backed group designed to inform the public about the downside of those always low prices.

WAL★MART

AIMS FOR ALWAYS LOW SALARIES



Last year, Wal-Mart raked in profits of \$11.2 billion—that’s \$11,200,000,000—on \$312 billion in sales. This year, in a bid to surpass that mark, top managers at the mammoth retailer have set their sights on capping workers’ pay.

Using such corporate code words as “workforce flexibility” and citing the need to “maintain competitiveness,” a confidential Wal-Mart management memo circulated in August revealed the company’s plans to cap employee wages by cutting back hours and pushing workers onto lower pay scales.

According to the memo, obtained by the union-backed group Wake-Up Wal-Mart, workers at the top of their pay scale are at risk of taking a pay cut if they transfer to another store, even if their new position is the same. Trying to put the best spin on the tactic, the memo describes this as a way to encourage employees to move up into management positions—although a management trainee might still wind up taking a pay cut.

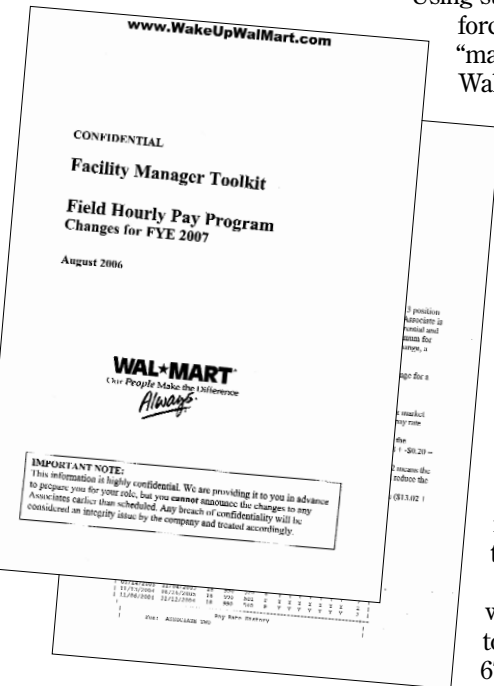
Wal-Mart also seems to have an odd way of defining “flexibility” when it comes to workers. For example, an \$11-an-hour, 67-year-old greeter in Oklahoma who had worked for Wal-Mart for 22 years told *The*

New York Times recently that managers had suddenly insisted she be available to work any shift, not just her usual day shift. After she refused, her hours were slashed from 32 per week to just 8, a move she charged was designed to force her out—successfully, as it happened—in a bid to save money on wages and benefits.

Figures prepared by the Economic Policy Institute show that Wal-Mart’s profits are so huge it could afford to give every employee a \$2,000 annual raise and still maintain a level of profitability far above similar big-box competitors such as Costco, which pays its workers \$17 per hour on average. Instead, thanks to its August policy memo, Wal-Mart workers now have even less chance of enjoying a bigger share of Wal-Mart’s prosperity. And the so-called “Bentonville Behemoth” continues to fiercely resist any efforts within its U.S. workforce to organize.

Wal-Mart employees aren’t likely to find much assistance in their unionizing efforts from the National Labor Relations Board, even though the board’s 1935 charter states that its mission is to enforce a policy “of assuring free choice and encouraging collective bargaining.” Lately, the board, controlled by a pro-business bloc, has taken a decidedly anti-worker, anti-union stance on most of the issues brought before it, including its recent decision to expand the definition of “supervisor” to include anyone who gives someone else a task to perform. Critics feel that this is a blatant move to bar a large segment of the workforce from union membership, further weakening the overall labor movement.

Since NLRB members are presidential appointees confirmed by the Senate, the best way for rank-and-file NALC members to help turn the board around is to vote for congressional candidates who support working men and women and their right to form unions. Not only can those lawmakers encourage the NLRB to enforce its charter and reverse the anti-labor policies that have been put in place over the past six years, they can also promote legislation strengthening workers’ ability to organize. ☐



A memo leaked to Wake Up Wal-Mart reveals the company’s plan to force workers to take lower pay.