

Better Health Care Together

On February 7th, Wal-Mart partnered with leaders in business, government, labor and public policy communities to launch the "Better Health Care Together" campaign. The announcement included a set of four common sense principles for achieving a new American health care system by 2012. These principles empower consumers to take more responsibility and control over their own health care. They recognize that America must get more for its healthcare dollar and that business should not bear a disproportionate share of health care costs. They also call for every American to have affordable health insurance coverage.

Wal-Mart is committed to high quality, affordable, accessible and secure health care for our associates and for all of America. And, even though over 90 percent of Wal-Mart associates have coverage, the current health care system doesn't work for many. Health care costs only seem to get higher every year, and the uninsured epidemic is growing. "Government alone won't and can't solve this crisis. We have to work together – business, labor, government and our communities. By following this campaign's common sense principles, we believe America can have high quality, affordable and accessible health care by 2012," said Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. President and CEO Lee Scott.

The four principles specified in the campaign are:

- We believe every person in America must have quality, affordable health insurance coverage.
- We believe individuals have a responsibility to maintain and protect their health.
- We believe that America must dramatically improve the value it receives for every health care dollar.
- We believe that businesses, governments, and individuals all should contribute to managing and financing a new American health care system.

Wal-Mart has been working hard over the past year to offer real solutions to the working families of America. Some of the major health and wellness initiatives Wal-Mart has implemented to improve health care conditions include:

- Offering \$4 prescription drugs to customers and associates across America.
- Reducing the eligibility waiting period by half for part-time associates.
- Expanding coverage to the children of both full- and part-time associates by offering coverage for only 50 cents per day as soon as their parents are eligible.
- Providing individual health care coverage for as little as \$11 per month in some areas.
- Promoting and supporting our associates' wellness and healthy lifestyle choices by providing convenient, affordable and innovative opportunities to make healthy choices every day.

The announcement was well-received by a variety of leaders involved in the health care debate. From elected officials to civic leaders to those in academia, the company continues to be recognized for its leadership and commitment to improving America's health care system.

- Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., who is championing his own measure (S 334) to create universal health care coverage, said the alliance of business and labor groups creates even more momentum for fixing the nation's health care system. "What business and labor seem to be agreeing on more and more is that everyone needs to be covered and it can't be done on the backs of business if we are to be competitive in a 21st global economy," Wyden said.
- Wal-Mart's push for universal health care lends more heft to the debate, Glen Mays, associate professor at the University of Arkansas said. "It makes it a much more serious dialogue when you've got large corporations like that who are coming to the table," he said. (Glen Mays, associate professor, University of Arkansas)
- "Today's announcement by America's largest employer and some of America's largest unions, along with organizations from across the political spectrum, is one more piece of evidence that there's broad agreement that Americans deserve a health care system that covers everyone and lowers costs. It is time for bold yet practical solutions and I will use today's encouraging news to continue my efforts to build support for universal health care." (Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton)

- Democrat John Podesta, a former chief of staff for President Bill Clinton, and Republican Howard Baker, former chief of staff for President Ronald Reagan, introduced the speakers. "I believe we have virtual unanimity that health care reform is an issue whose time has come," Baker said.
- Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is pushing his own universal health insurance proposal in California, welcomed the creation of the broad-based national coalition. (Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, R-CA)
- "I think this is one more clear call by employers for help," Dr. Joe Thompson, the state's [Arkansas] chief health officer, said of the Washington news conference. "All the data suggests that we are losing the employer-based or the private-sector health insurance coverage."
- Greg D'Angelo, research assistant with the Center for Health Policy Studies at the conservative Heritage Foundation, told Cybercast News Service Wednesday's event demonstrates that many financial leaders realize the health care model "we have now doesn't necessarily work for the type of dynamic economy we have."

For more information on Wal-Mart's benefits plans, please visit www.walmartstores.com.

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