An Analysis of Walmart & Walton Family Political Spending 2000-2012
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For more information, visit www.ChangeWalmart.org
INTRODUCTION

Walmart has gone to great lengths in recent years to burnish its reputation as a positive, environmentally-friendly contributor to communities across the country and around the world. But for even longer, the company has been increasing its presence both in Washington, DC, and in local politics nationwide. The sides it takes and the politicians it contributes to are more telling than any press release or PR stunt.

Just as the total amount of money in politics increases with each passing presidential election cycle, Walmart and the Walton family have dramatically increased their spending compared with a decade or more ago. Through corporate political action committee spending, contributions by executives and family members associated with the company, direct spending by the corporation on state-level politics where permitted, and likely many more undisclosed channels, Walmart is a major player seeking to advance an extreme partisan agenda, typically in ways counter to average Americans’ interests.

Walmart’s political action committee

Like many companies, Walmart has a political action committee—Wal-Mart Stores Inc. PAC for Responsible Government—that solicits money from employees and then spends it to advance the company’s political objectives.

There was a time when company founder and family patriarch Sam Walton said that Walmart had no place in politics, but those days are clearly over. The Walmart PAC has gone from spending virtually nothing in federal elections in the early nineties to topping $2 million in three of the last five federal election cycles. Additionally, many states permit direct corporate spending on elections, and Walmart engages in this as well.

The Walton family and political spending

At the same time, the Walton family, whose members own over half of Walmart common stock and occupy three seats on the company’s board, use their vast fortune to influence the political process at all levels. Heirs to the founders of Walmart, the Waltons are the richest family in America, with over $115 billion. In many ways, the Walton family is the public face of the company founded by Sam Walton and his brother Bud. Their wealth is inextricably linked to Walmart’s success, since it comes almost exclusively from their holdings in the company and their actions—political or otherwise—are often seen as reflecting on the company itself.

The Waltons are able to wield their fortune in ways ordinary Americans cannot, influencing our democracy and contributing to a political system where the strength of voters’ voices is relative to the size of their wallets, not the number of ballots cast. During the 2012 election cycle, members of the Walton family spent over $1.3 million in federal elections, favoring conservative candidates and causes by a landslide. They spent hundreds of thousands more at the state and local levels, forcing their values—and vision of corporate-style education reform in particular—on communities where they do not even reside.

7. Analysis of Data From Center for Responsive Politics: opensecrets.org
8. http://walmart1percent.org/education/
Walmart Lobbyists

On top of direct contributions to elected officials and candidates, Walmart also employs and contracts with an army of lobbyists who are charged with advancing the company’s interests in Washington, DC. The company’s spending in the capital increases with each passing year, and its scores of lobbyists advance Walmart’s interests on a surprising breadth of issues at dozens of federal agencies.

In 2012, Walmart spent $6,130,000 on federal lobbying. The company employed or contracted with 81 lobbyists, the vast majority of whom have made their way through the “revolving door” between Capitol Hill and lobbying firms.9 The company’s top lobbying issues were taxes, labor, homeland security, trade, consumer product safety, and the food industry.10 While federal law requires that Walmart disclose the issues it lobbies on and what it spends, unfortunately, Walmart does not have to explain what side it takes. So while it is clear that Walmart has lobbied on the formation of unions, corporate tax reform, port security, and online privacy, the company’s stance on these issues must be surmised.

Walmart and the Waltons are able to hide much of their political activity

While federal, state, and local regulations require the disclosure of much political spending, there is a potentially vast array of political spending by both the company and the family that goes unreported.

Walmart belongs to a number of trade associations and other tax-exempt groups that influence elections and the political process. Walmart is not required to and currently does not disclose the amount of its dues and other payments made to these organizations that are used for political purposes. Some of the higher profile organizations of which Walmart is a member include the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Retail Industry Leaders Association, Business Forward, and the Business Roundtable.

Trade associations and nonprofit “social welfare” organizations like Karl Rove’s Crossroads GPS or Americans for Prosperity are shrouded in secrecy: they are not required to disclose their donors, and their spending is not reported to any public agency.11 This is commonly referred to as “dark money.” In a report by Demos and US PIRG Public Education Fund last June, the authors wrote that “there is mounting evidence that nonprofits will again outspend Super PACs in 2012” just as they did in 2010,12 and the public has no way of knowing who is behind much of the funding.

As Lee Fang recently wrote in The Nation, “the hundreds of millions slushing in secret money is bound to lead to another major scandal. And that scandal will likely to produce a lot of liability for the corporations involved.”13

At the state level, Walmart was a longtime member of the controversial American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) until May 2012. ALEC is infamous for promoting legislation that advances a conservative ideological agenda and benefits its members at the expense of everyone else. The organization developed and promoted anti-union legislation in Wisconsin and Ohio,14 as well as Arizona’s anti-immigrant SB 1070.15 It has also been an ardent supporter of the privatization of education,16 voter-ID laws17—which distort our democracy by making it

12. Ibid.
14. http://www.commoncause.org/atif/cf/%7B8b3c17e2-cdd1-4df6-92be-bd4429893665%7D/MONEYPOWERANDALEC.PDF
15. http://www.prwatch.org/node/10980
harder for low-income people and people of color to vote—and is becoming increasingly known for having
developed the “Stand Your Ground” law that became notorious following the death of Trayvon Martin. Under intense public pressure, Walmart withdrew from ALEC in May 2012. The Walton Family Foundation has clear ties to ALEC, but has so far refused to sever ties with the group.

**A note on the Walmart Foundation as “a lever”**

While the scope of this report is deliberately limited to political spending, it should be noted that the way in which the spending of the tax-exempt Walmart Foundation is regularly used to advance the interests of the company has come under increased scrutiny of late. Leslie Dach, Walmart’s Executive Vice President for Corporate Affairs who recently announced his retirement, has spoken of the importance of the company’s philanthropic endeavors to improving Walmart’s reputation. He described that reputation as “a lever” in pursuing the company’s goals, which include expanding into urban America.

In February, 2013, *The Nation* magazine released a 4-page memo from the Walmart Foundation that details the ways in which support from the foundation comes with clear expectations about the ways in which grantees can “honor” Walmart and even suggests that organizations may consider presenting awards to the company and the Foundation.

In March 2013, President Obama nominated Sylvia Matthews Burwell, the president of the Walmart Foundation, as director of the federal Office of Management and Budget.

**Walmart and the Walton Family Spend Millions to Influence the Democratic Process, Disproportionately Supporting Conservative Politicians and Causes**

From the 2000 election cycle through the 2012 cycle, the Waltons and the Walmart PAC spent nearly $17 million in federal elections.

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Since the 2000 election cycle, more than $11.6 million—69% of Walmart and the Waltons’ contributions—has gone to Republican candidates and committees.\(^{22}\) Over this time period 83% of the Waltons’ contributions, including their contributions to Super PACs, went to Republicans.\(^ {23}\) As the following analysis shows, the candidates supported by Walmart and the Walton family also disproportionately favored conservative causes and issues.

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\(^{22}\) Analysis of Data from the Center for Responsive Politics, opensecrets.org

\(^{23}\) Ibid
The Waltons spend big on super PACs

With some of the deepest pockets in America, the Waltons are spending millions to shape our democracy to serve their own interests. Despite the fear of a landslide of corporate political contributions following the Supreme Court’s landmark federal election decisions in 2010, the top five contributors to super PACs during the 2012 cycle were *individuals*, each of them worth half a billion or more. The Waltons gave just shy of $900,000 to super PACs during the 2012 cycle. Of that, $400,000 went to Restore Our Future, the super PAC associated with Mitt Romney. Alice Walton and Jim Walton each gave the PAC $200,000.

As of June 30, 2012 there were 220 active super PACs, which have raised more than $312 million for the 2012 election. Most of the contributions to super PACs had come from individuals, not corporations. Individuals had given $230 million to super PACs as of the end of June. In fact, there were only 356 donors—including Jim and Alice Walton—who had given over $100,000 to super PACs. Contributions of over $100,000 from individuals made up 63% of all super PAC contributions.

Only 0.01% of Americans give more than $10,000 to Congressional campaigns in any election cycle. Jim, Lynne, Alice, and Samuel R. Walton each crossed this threshold during the 2012 cycle. When all federal giving is included, each of those four Waltons contributed well over $100,000 during the 2012 cycle.

**THE WAlTON FAMILY, WHILE DISPROPORTIONATELY SUPPORTING REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES, HAS NOT LIMITED THEMSELVES TO MODERATES WITHIN THE GOP**

In 2012, Jim Walton contributed to the re-election campaign of Loy Mauch, an Arkansas state legislator who has called the Confederate flag a “symbol of Jesus Christ” and acknowledged membership in the “neo-confederate” secessionist group known as League of the South. After Mauch’s views and Walton’s contribution made headlines, Jim Walton asked that the contribution be returned. In his letter to Mauch, Walton wrote, “The contribution was made because of your support for education reform in Arkansas. Since making the contribution, however, I have learned about some of your views on other issues with which I disagree.”

However, Mauch’s views on education are fairly extreme as well. For example, Mauch wrote in a letter to the editor of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette in 2006, “Public education was forced upon the South during Reconstruction to complete the aim of the radical socialists, which was to destroy Southern conservatism.”

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26. Analysis of Data from the Center for Responsive Politics, opensecrets.org
27. Ibid
34. http://walmart1percent.org/2012/11/02/does-jim-walton-think-public-schools-are-a-communist-plot/
Jim Walton and his wife Lynne have also contributed $3,000 to extremist Arkansas State Senator Jason Rapert (R-Conway) since December 2010, according to financial reports filed with the Arkansas Secretary of State. Rapert has faced recent public scrutiny for his anti-gay and anti-choice positions— and for using racially-tinged language to attack President Obama at a rally in 2011. Rapert invited national criticism in early 2013 by pushing radical anti-choice legislation through the Arkansas State Senate. Rapert’s bill could effectively outlaw abortions after six weeks and force women seeking to terminate a pregnancy to submit to a vaginal probe. Rapert proudly declares himself a birther and attacks the state Supreme Court for knocking down a ban on gay adoptions.

**Case Study: Steve Womack (R, AR-03) Gets Tens of Thousands from Walmart and the Waltons in One Month**

Before being elected to represent Northwest Arkansas in Congress in 2010, Republican Steve Womack may have been best known for his virulently anti-immigrant views as mayor of Rogers, AR, home to many Walmart executives.

During his tenure there, Womack faced a class action lawsuit. According to *Newsweek*:

“If you're coming to America illegally,” [Womack] declared in his campaign, “you don't want to come to Rogers.” A year later the Immigration and Naturalization Service had two agents temporarily housed in the Rogers Police Department. And in March that collaboration—and the alleged abuses it generated—prompted the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) to file a class-action suit against the city and the police for racial profiling.

The Walmart PAC and individuals with close ties to the company are important donors to Womack. During the 2012 cycle, he was their top Congressional candidate by a landslide, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

Walmart and the Waltons gave tens of thousands to Womack during the 2012 elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Womack for Congress (Campaign committee)</th>
<th>Razor PAC (Leadership PAC)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walmart PAC</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waltons</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walmart execs and AR-based employees</td>
<td>$29,450</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$5,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$54,450</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$15,000</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Analysis of data from the FEC*

37. *Ibid*
Contributions from the Walmart PAC, Walmart employees, and the Walton family yielded $54,450 for Womack’s campaign during the 2012 cycle. His leadership PAC received another $15,000—27% of its total receipts—from the Walmart PAC and Walmart employees. The Walmart PAC made the maximum permitted contributions Womack’s campaign, as did each of the three Waltons who contributed. Additionally, the Walmart PAC gave the maximum to his leadership PAC.

Interestingly, more than half of all these contributions came in during a very lucrative window in June 2011. Three Waltons gave Womack’s campaign $5,000 each all on the same day that month. Around the same time, Walmart employees made contributions to his campaign and leadership PAC totaling $20,650. These came from executives with recognizable names like Doug McMillon, Charles Holley, and Susan Chambers, plus about two dozen others. The apparent coordination of funding to the Womack campaign by the Walmart PAC, high-ranking Walmart employees, and the Walton family suggests that Bentonville’s political strategy is pursued in tandem by all three sources.

**June 2011 was the most lucrative month for Womack’s campaign and Walmart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Donor</th>
<th>Total contributions to Womack committees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 10-15, 2011</td>
<td>Walmart PAC</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 11-28, 2011</td>
<td>Walmart employees</td>
<td>$20,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 28, 2011</td>
<td>Alice, Jim, and Lynne Walton</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>June 2011 Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$37,650</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Analysis of data from the FEC*

In July 2012, Rep. Steve Womack of Arkansas offered an insight into Walmart’s legislative priorities not generally present in the retailer’s federally-mandated but opaque lobbying reports. Speaking to Bloomberg about a bill that would have allowed states to collect sales tax on online purchases made from out-of-state merchants, Rep. Womack said, “This is Wal-Mart’s top issue, if not one of their top issues.” Womack, who wrote the bill, went on to explain, “Wal-Mart is important to me because they are headquartered in my district.”

Then, in October 2012, his campaign brought in another $10,500 from Walmart employees and executives. Walmart has yet to find success with its “top priority,” but Womack hasn’t given up either. And his latest run for Congress offers insight into the ways that the Walmart PAC, company executives, and the Waltons from time to time act in concert.

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42. Analysis of Womack campaign filings with the Federal Election Commission: [http://query.nictusa.com/cgi-bin/cancomsr5/?_12+H0AR03055](http://query.nictusa.com/cgi-bin/cancomsr5/?_12+H0AR03055)
**Actions speak louder than words**

Although Walmart’s public relations machine has worked hard in recent years to make the company more palatable to more traditionally liberal groups in America, a comparison of the company’s PAC and family’s political contributions with scorecards compiled on key votes by organizations working to support immigrant rights, LGBT-rights, and environmental protection among other things, makes clear the company’s disproportionate support for politicians working to support the status quo. In each of the following areas, the company’s PAC disproportionately favored candidates who are weak on these issues. As the following charts reveal, the reality of Walmart’s support for conservative politicians consistently runs counter to their public rhetoric around support for progressive policies and initiatives.

**Gun control**

A number of tragic incidents in 2012 brought gun control and the forces shaping American public policy on the issue—like the National Rifle Association and the American Legislative Exchange Council—into the spotlight. But while Walmart’s role as the nation’s largest seller of guns and ammunition has been widely reported, their role in supporting a pro-gun political agenda has not been widely understood.

From 2005 through 2012, the Walmart PAC gave nearly $1.7 million to candidates endorsed by the NRA. The Waltons gave another half a million to NRA-endorsed federal politicians over that time period, including super PAC funds. Among candidates with scores from the NRA, 58% of the Walmart PAC’s contributions and 76% of the Waltons’ contributions went to those endorsed by the pro-gun lobby. And the NRA only endorsed less than a third of candidates to whom it gave scores. In fact, among politicians with 2012 grades from the NRA, three quarters of the Waltons’ 2005-2012 contributions went to candidates with scores between A+ and A. Only 31% of candidates received such high scores.

The Walmart PAC and Waltons favored NRA-endorsed candidates

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44. The statements in this paragraph are based on an analysis of contribution data from the Center for Responsive Politics, opensecrets.org, compared to NRA endorsement data, www.nrapvf.org/

45. www.nrapvf.org/
Beyond their direct support for NRA-endorsed candidates, Walmart and the Walton family have also helped support a pro-gun agenda through their participation in the right-wing American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a membership organization made up primarily of companies and conservative state legislators, produces right-wing model legislation that is then introduced in state legislatures nationwide.46

ALEC’s pro-gun efforts have included opposing bans on semi-automatic weapons47 and opposing waiting periods for background checks.48 ALEC also helped propagate the notorious “Stand Your Ground” law linked to the killing of Trayvon Martin in Florida last February. The “Stand Your Ground” law, which initially shielded Martin’s shooter from arrest in weeks following the killing, came out of an ALEC working committee co-chaired by a Walmart executive in 2005.49

Last year, amid intense public pressure, Walmart withdrew from ALEC. However, there is no evidence that the Walton Family Foundation has withdrawn from ALEC, despite the fact that civil rights leaders and others have called on them to do so.

As the country’s biggest seller of firearms and ammunition, Walmart has relied on gun sales to improve its poor performance. In 2011, Walmart reportedly began stocking more guns to boost its flagging same store sales.50

Following the tragic shootings in Connecticut last December, Walmart pulled the type of assault rifle used in the attack from its website, but it was still available in about 1,700 stores nationally.51 The move belied Walmart and the Walton family’s support of pro-gun politicians and the company’s reliance on gun sales.

**Environment**

Walmart and the Walton family finance politicians who fight action to address the climate crisis, including funding the campaigns of some of the most powerful climate change deniers in Congress. Between 2005 and 2012, Walmart and the Waltons gave $2.1 million, more than half of their total Congressional campaign donations, to members of Congress with lifetime scores of 30 or less on the League of Conservation Voters scorecard.52

During the 2011-2012 election cycle, 70% of contributions from Walmart and the Walton family went to lawmakers who voted in favor of the Keystone XL Tar Sands Pipeline compared with only 60% who voted for it.53 In June 2012, Walmart chair Rob Walton gave $10,000 to a super PAC running ads criticizing Rep. Jeff Flake’s (R-AZ) vote against the pipeline.54

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47. http://alecexposed.org/w/images/0/00/7J11-Resolution_on_Semi-copy_Exposed.pdf
51. Ibid
53. Analysis of contribution data from the Center of Responsive Politics, opensecrets.org, with voting records from the Congressional record.
54. http://walmart1percent.org/2012/07/20/rob-walton-secure-arizona/
Marriage equality and LGBT rights

Neither Walmart nor the Waltons have an encouraging track record when it comes to supporting gay rights. As the country faces a watershed moment for LGBT equality, the Walton family and Walmart continue to heavily back opponents of progress and send clear signals that they are on the wrong side of history.

Hundreds of corporations filed briefs with the Supreme Court in support of same sex marriage in 2013, but Walmart was not among them. In fact, Walmart finds itself near the bottom of the Human Rights Campaign’s Corporate Equality Index for 2013. Among other things, the report notes that Walmart does not offer health, dental, or vision benefits to same sex partners and the company does not have company-wide organizational competency programs highlighting sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Waltons appear to be similarly-minded when it comes to blocking progress. In 2008, Jim Walton gave $75,000 to the Arkansas Family Council Action Committee, which at the time was supporting a ballot measure to prevent gay families from adopting. Walton’s contribution amounted to over 55% of all the money the group raised that cycle. The measure passed but has since been struck down by the Arkansas State Supreme Court (although defended by Walton-backed extremist state representative Jason Rapert).

Meanwhile, every year since 2002, the Walton Family Foundation has made grants to the Christian missionary group Young Life. The group specifically prohibits gays and lesbians from serving as staff or volunteers with the organization.

57. Ibid
58. Data from Walton Family Foundation IRS Form 990, reviewed at Guidestar.org
So it is perhaps unsurprising that both Walmart and the Waltons tend to favor candidates with abysmal track records on gay rights. Among members of Congress listed in the Human Rights Campaign’s latest scorecard, the overwhelming majority of the Waltons’ campaign contributions from 2005 to 2012 went to those who either oppose or are silent on gay marriage. Only 6% of their contributions went to members of Congress who support gay marriage, even though more than half the public and 35% of Congress do.

The Waltons’ contributions almost completely exclude pro-marriage equality candidates

The Walmart PAC doesn’t fare much better. Their contributions don’t stack up well against the Human Rights Campaign’s overall scorecard or on the issue of gay marriage, in particular. The majority of the Walmart PAC’s contributions went to candidates with scores below 25 out of 100. In fact, the PAC gave over $1.5 million between 2005 and 2012 to candidates with scores of 0 alone. Over the same time period, 77% of the PAC’s contributions went to those who either oppose or are silent on gay marriage. Combined, only 21% of Walmart and the Waltons’ contributions over this time period went to proponents of equality.

Minimum wage

The Waltons, the face of the one percent in America, have made their fortune from Walmart. It’s a fortune built on the backs of low-paid workers, dating back to the company’s founding. When President Kennedy extended the minimum wage to apply to retail workers, Sam Walton did all he could to avoid paying it, breaking his company up into a series of smaller companies in an attempt to exempt them from the law. Ultimately, a federal court ruled against Walton and ordered him to pay back his employees what they were owed, plus a penalty. He paid up, but not stopping there, Sam Walton told his employees that he’d fire anyone who cashed the check.

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62. Ibid
63. Ibid
64. http://prospect.org/article/wal-marts-image-0
Back then, the minimum wage was $1.15. Since that time, it hasn’t come close to keeping up with inflation, so the House recently voted on a measure to increase it to $10.10 and index it to inflation. It didn’t pass, with 54% of the House voting against it. The Waltons’ recent contributions do provide some insight into how the Waltons are carrying on the tradition of the family patriarch, however. From 2005 to 2012, a staggering 95% of the Waltons’ political contributions to House members who voted on the minimum wage increase went to those who opposed the measure.

The Walmart PAC and Waltons favored House members who voted against raising the minimum wage

![Bar chart showing the percentage of House members in favor of minimum wage increase and those against it, based on Walmart PAC and Walton contributions from 2005 to 2012.]

The Walmart PAC also favored opponents of the minimum wage hike. Among House members voting on raising the minimum wage, three-fifths of the Walmart PAC and Waltons’ contributions from 2005 to 2012 went to those opposing the increase. Among House members voting on raising the minimum wage, three-fifths of the Walmart PAC and Waltons’ contributions from 2005 to 2012 went to those opposing the increase.

Immigration

One of Walmart’s newest trade associations is Business Forward. The group is made up of a number of major corporations and has allied itself with the White House, receiving exceptional access to high-ranking officials. While the group meets with White House representatives to discuss immigration reform, it is important to note that Walmart’s actions speak louder than any front group’s words.

The company’s track record in the Latino community is abysmal, and the Walmart PAC and Waltons’ political contributions disproportionately favor anti-immigrant politicians. Between 2005 and 2012, 52% of the Walmart PAC’s political contributions went to members of Congress with scores of 25 and below on the William C. Velasquez Institute’s Immigrant Justice Scorecard from 2010 (the most recent available). On the other hand, only 45% of those ranked received such low scores.

Many elected officials who received contributions from Walmart PAC and the Waltons also supported E-verify, immigrant detention, militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border, and funding local law enforcement agencies to conduct enforcement of federal immigration laws.\textsuperscript{70}

More than half of the Walmart PAC and Waltons' contributions went to anti-immigrant candidates

Up and down the supply chain, Walmart’s actions tell a similar, anti-Latino and anti-immigrant story, starting with workers directly employed by the company. Walmart’s low wages are not good for anyone, but minorities are disproportionately represented in low-paying positions. While people of color made up 37% of Walmart’s US workforce in 2012, only 27% of first and mid-level officials and managers were minorities.\textsuperscript{71}

Women

Just two years ago, Walmart’s lawyers found themselves before the Supreme Court because of a class action lawsuit brought against the company by its female employees, who believed they had been discriminated against. The Supreme Court was tasked with deciding whether or not the women could be considered a class, not whether or not Walmart had discriminated, but important stories and details of what it’s like to be a woman working at Walmart emerged along the way. In 2001, a statistician studied Walmart’s records and found that female Walmart employees at all levels earned less than their male counterparts.\textsuperscript{72}

Women at Walmart earned $5,200 less per year than men, on average. Women who worked in hourly positions earned $1,100 less than men in the same position. Women in salaried positions earned $14,500 less than men in the same position. In 2012, women made up 57% of Walmart’s workforce in the U.S., but they held only 42% of top and mid-level management positions.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{70} Analysis of data from the Center for Responsive Politics and comparison of Immigrant Justice Scorecard \url{http://wcvi.org/justice/reportcard/reportcard_home.htm}
\textsuperscript{71} \url{http://corporate.walmart.com/global-responsibility/diversity-inclusion}
\textsuperscript{72} \url{http://www.walmartclass.com/statdata/reports/r2.pdf}
\textsuperscript{73} \url{http://corporate.walmart.com/global-responsibility/diversity-inclusion}
The Walmart PAC and Waltons’ political contributions reflect this track record. Among candidates with scores on the American Association of University Women’s 2012 Congressional scorecard, the majority of the Walmart PAC and Waltons’ contributions went to those with scores of 25 and below.\(^{74}\) The scorecard factors in a range of issues including the reauthorization of the Violence against Women Act, the Paycheck Fairness Act, Planned Parenthood funding, and education.

![Candidates with low scores on women’s issues received disproportionately more from the Walmart PAC and the Waltons](image)

**Civil rights**

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights evaluated the 112th Congress based on votes including misguided attempts to protect voter ID laws, attacks on worker rights, the Ryan budget, and extending Bush-era tax cuts.\(^{75}\) A comparison of this scorecard with the Walmart PAC and Waltons’ contributions from 2005 to 2012 shows that, among candidates with scores, the Walmart PAC and Waltons favored candidates who failed to protect civil rights. In fact, 85% of the Waltons’ contributions went to candidates with scores of 25 below, out of 100.

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The Walton family further undermines Americans’ civil rights through the Walton Family Foundation’s continued membership in ALEC. Legislation supported by the right wing group and its members includes the recent round of voter suppression laws introduced in 27 states. Supporters of discriminatory voter ID laws claim they want to reduce voter fraud, but such fraud almost never actually occurs, and never in amounts large enough to impact the result of elections. 76 These laws have a disproportionate impact on the poor, the elderly, and people of color.

WALMART FORCES COSTLY SPECIAL ELECTIONS, PERVERTING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AND REINFORCING ITS REPUTATION AS A DRAIN ON LOCAL ECONOMIES

Walmart has undertaken a controversial strategy to expand its footprint in California in the face of increasing public opposition. The company has increasingly been using the ballot initiative process to threaten costly special elections and circumvent environmental review.

The process is simple, as *California Watch* explains:

The Arkansas-based retailer has hired paid signature gatherers to circulate petitions to build new superstores or repeal local restrictions on big-box stores. Once 15 percent of eligible voters sign the petitions, state election law puts cash-strapped cities in a bind: City councils must either approve the Wal-Mart-drafted measure without changes or put it to a special election.

As local officials grapple with whether to spend tens of thousands or even millions of taxpayer dollars on such an election, Wal-Mart urges cities to approve the petition outright rather than send it to voters.  

Walmart has honed this tactic in cities and towns across the state, perhaps most notably in San Diego, where it spent over $2 million paying election lawyers, campaign consultants, and public relations firms in an effort to open four new stores and fight big box regulations. The company gathered the necessary signatures for a referendum to repeal big box legislation in 2011, at a time when no other elections were slated. A special election would have cost the city $3.4 million. The City Council, forced into a corner, overturned the law instead. As one City Council member put it, "Let’s be clear, this is a dark day for democracy."  

Walmart’s strategy has the added benefit of helping the company avoid lawsuits under the California Environmental Quality Act, which concerns the environmental and traffic impacts of development projects—the law does not apply to ballot initiatives.

**CASE STUDY: THE WALTONS’ PET CAUSE, UNDERMINING PUBLIC EDUCATION**

The Waltons do not shy away from opportunities to use their inherited fortune to influence politics and pursue right-wing political goals. The same holds true of their goal to undermine public education. In recent years, the family has spent more than $1 billion in efforts to “infuse competitive pressure into America’s K-12 education system.” This is a vast sum despite the fact that it is spent mostly in states where no Walton family members live or have children in school, that competitive market principles don’t apply to education, and that allowing the wealthiest members of our society to dictate public policy matters like education by slinging around their wealth is profoundly anti-democratic.

The Waltons are funding the corporate education reform movement in two ways: through the Walton Family Foundation and through local-level political donations.

Since 2005, the family’s tax-exempt foundation has given more than $1 billion to corporate education reform causes. Walton grantees include:

78. Ibid
80. [http://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/educationreform](http://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/educationreform)
• Myriad voucher and charter school advocacy organizations, including the Milton Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice; union-buster Stand for Children; and Michelle Rhee’s pro-privatization, pro-high stakes testing organization, Students First.

• The Alliance for School Choice, a pro-voucher organization led by Betsy DeVos of Michigan’s notorious right-wing DeVos family. (Carrie Walton Penner is an ASC board member.)

• The National Right to Work Legal Defense and Education Foundation.

Since 2000, members of the Walton family have spent at least $24 million dollars funding politicians, political action committees, and ballot issues at the state and local level that favor their corporate approach to school reform. At local levels of government, where fundraising totals are smaller than those at the federal level, Walton largesse can go a very long way toward shaping public policy.

• 2012 charter school ballot initiatives

In November 2012, residents of Washington State voted on I-1240, an initiative that would essentially permit charter schools in Washington, which currently doesn’t accommodate them, and that included a fairly aggressive “parent trigger” clause. The signature filing deadline was July 6, 2012; five days later, Alice Walton—who lives in Texas, not the Pacific Northwest—gave $600,000 to the pro-charter school committee. By Election Day, she had given a total of $1.7 million and become the cause’s second largest donor. Similar initiatives had already been rejected by Washington voters three times since the ‘90s. In fact, in 2004, John Walton was the biggest contributor to that year’s failed charter school initiative, giving over $1 million. This year, the measure—nicknamed “the billionaires’ initiative” because of massive financial support from Walton and other colossally wealthy donors like Bill Gates—passed with 50.69% of the vote. Alice Walton contributed another $600,000 in support of a constitutional amendment in Georgia allowing the establishment of charter schools. The measure passed.

• Wisconsin 2010

From 2009-2010, the election cycle that brought Republicans to power in Wisconsin, Alice Walton was the top individual donor to Wisconsin legislators according to WisconsinWatch.org. Alice and five other Waltons were among the top fifteen political donors in Wisconsin legislative races during that election cycle. The legislative victories they contributed to, combined with the family foundation’s multi-million dollar efforts to fund experiments in school choice in the state, serve as a multi-pronged approach to further their conservative agenda.

85. http://dianeravitch.net/2013/01/08/michelle-rhees-upside-down-agenda/
86. http://www.alliancelforschoolchoice.org/leadership
87. IRS Form 990 report from Walton Family Foundation. Accessed at Guidestar.org
88. This figure—which includes donations to candidates for school board positions, education PACs, and charter school ballot initiatives—is likely an underestimate, as local-level campaign finance information is more difficult to access and is held by varying jurisdictions. It is based on data obtained from campaign finance databases in California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.
The Waltons have spent $2.9 million in state-level politics in California over the past two decades, far more than in any other state. In 2006, Bay Area resident Greg Penner helped oppose an early childhood education initiative that would have increased taxes on the wealthy:

- **2006 California early childhood education initiative**

  The Waltons contributed to the defeat of one of the largest early childhood education initiatives in state history. In 2006, Greg Penner, Walmart board member and son-in-law of S. Robson Walton, contributed $250,000 to “No on 82.” The so-called “Reiner Initiative” — named after its sponsor, actor and director Rob Reiner—sought to establish a universal preschool system in California for four-year-olds by placing an additional income tax on individuals making more than $400,000 a year, and couples making in excess of $800,000.

  The Waltons are also attempting to stack the deck in favor of their preferred candidates in local political races—specifically those for school superintendent and school board, which typically get less attention and fewer campaign dollars but are critical in setting education policy. For example:

  - **Louisiana:** In 2011, Greg Penner and Carrie Walton Penner each gave $5,000 to Kira Orange Jones, a candidate for the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Orange Jones, the Teach for America head in New Orleans, is said to have “[run] as the embodiment of post-Katrina reform efforts in New Orleans”—efforts that have focused on charter schools and school privatization. In October 2012, Penner gave $2,500 to Sarah Newell Usdin, who successfully ran for the New Orleans school board. Usdin runs a New Orleans-based corporate education reform nonprofit. The Walton Family Foundation gave Usdin’s organization, New Schools for New Orleans, $1.2 million in 2012.

  - **Indiana:** In July 2012, Alice Walton gave $200,000 to state superintendent candidate Tony Bennett, who backs vouchers, charters, teacher merit pay, and high-stakes testing. Three months later, Greg Penner gave $5,000 to a candidate for the Indianapolis school board.

  - **New Jersey:** In Fall 2012, Greg Penner gave $8,000 to a political committee supporting a slate of candidates for the Perth Amboy, NJ school board.

The political activities of the Walton family and Walmart frequently intertwine and reinforce each other, even when it comes to education reform. Last summer, Walmart sponsored a fundraiser concert in Los Angeles called “Teachers Rock,” which featured performances by well-known bands, appearances by celebrities, and scenes from *Won’t Back Down.* The film is a highly favorable treatment of “parent-trigger” laws, whose production was funded by conservative media company Anschutz Film Group. Parent-trigger laws are a controversial education reform tactic promoted by the notorious right-wing American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and favored by the Walton family.
Public school advocates criticized Walmart for backing the “Teachers Rock” event, pointing out that even the event’s name was a cynical choice given that parent-trigger laws prompt mass firings of school teachers and staff. Wrote education historian and professor Diane Ravitch: “Strange way to ‘honor’ teachers—by firing them and giving the school to a non-union private entity to manage, which may hire only young teachers willing to work a 50-60 hour week at low wages. More ‘honors’ like this and there won’t be a teaching profession in America, just teaching temps.”

Part of the proceeds from the Walmart-sponsored concert also went to a group with deep Walton connections: Teach for America. Walmart director and Walton family member Greg Penner is on the national board of directors.

Unless otherwise noted, federal political contributions data in this report were provided by the Center for Responsive Politics.

UFCW and OUR Walmart have the purpose of helping Walmart employees as individuals or groups in their dealings with Walmart over labor rights and standards and their efforts to have Walmart publicly commit to adhering to labor rights and standards. UFCW and OUR Walmart have no intent to have Walmart recognize or bargain with UFCW or OUR Walmart as the representative of Walmart employees.