

Brennan Center, Chicago Community Groups Propose Law to Improve Job Standards at Wal-Mart

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Proposed Law to Improve Job Standards at Wal-Mart

Announced by Chicago City Sponsors

Proposal Requires Wal-Mart and Other Large Retailers to Provide Living Wages, Benefits Like Health Care and Community Access

New York, NY -- If a proposed City of Chicago Ordinance is enacted, employees at new Chicago “big box” retailers such as Wal-Mart will be guaranteed a living wage of almost \$10.50 per hour plus benefits such as health care.

The proposal, which will be announced Tuesday by Chicago City Council sponsors, is backed by a coalition of community groups and labor unions. The proposed ordinance would also guarantee access to the sidewalks at retailers like Wal-Mart for community members to talk to the public and workers about civic and labor issues, while

encouraging local hiring through a so-called “First Source” hiring program.

The entry of Wal-Mart and other large retailers into Chicago, as in other urban areas around the country, has been met with resistance from groups who see the market domination and low-wages of such firms undermining job standards for all workers in the community.

“This ordinance,” said Nathan Newman, associate counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law School, who drafted the coalition’s proposal, “will ensure that large retailers like Wal-Mart live up to their promises to provide decent jobs and sustain civic life in Chicago.”

The Chicago proposal illustrates a new community strategy for defending workplace standards in response to large retailers like Wal-Mart. Building on the successes of the “living wage” movement, this Chicago proposal follows the example of cities, such as San Francisco, Santa Fe, Madison, and Berkeley, which have recently enacted broader local wage laws that raise pay for workers at some or all private businesses in their communities—not just at businesses that receive city contracts, as most early living wage laws did.

“We have no problem with these big stores coming into our neighborhoods – as long as they make life better for folks – not worse,” said Toni Foulkes, a member of ACORN, a lead organization in the coalition backing the legislation.

To learn more about the ordinance and the public announcement, please contact Nathan Newman at (212) 992-8638.

For additional information on the Living Wage movement, please visit the Center's [Living Wage page](#).

The Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, founded in

1995, unites thinkers and advocates in pursuit of a vision of inclusive and effective democracy. Its mission is to develop and implement an innovative, nonpartisan agenda of scholarship, public education, and legal action that promotes equality and human dignity, while safeguarding fundamental freedoms.
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