



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on September 5, 2013

Walmart to Extend Health Insurance to Same-Sex Partners of Its Employees

The nation's largest private employer has announced that it will extend healthcare and other benefits to the domestic partners of its non-married employees, including to homosexual partners. Walmart quietly announced its new policy, which will begin in January, with a postcard sent to employees. [Forbes](#) reported that Walmart told its employees that all full-time company "associates" would be able to cover a spouse or domestic partner regardless of gender.



[Forbes](#) quoted Walmart's senior vice president of benefits, Sally Welborn, as writing in an internal memo to company management that the move was a "business decision, not a moral or political decision. We operate in 50 states, hundreds of municipalities and Puerto Rico, and as clarified under the Supreme Court's decision to strike down section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), each of these states are developing different definitions of marriage, domestic partner, civil union, etc. By developing a single definition for all Walmart associates in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, we are able to ensure consistency for associates across our markets."

According to [Forbes](#), the memo included an admonition from Welborn to Walmart executives and retail managers about their words and actions regarding the controversial policy change. "Your behavior matters," Welborn's memo reportedly said. "The words you use also matter. We are counting on you to be thoughtful, supportive and understanding of multiple viewpoints. Your visibility can make a big difference to how associates feel."

Chad Griffin of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), a high-profile homosexual activist group, applauded Walmart's decision, recalling that he once worked at an Arkansas Walmart. "I am moved by my former employer's historic action that further proves equality is good business," Griffin wrote in an e-mailed statement published by [USA Today](#). Griffin gushed that the company "has sent a cultural signal that equality for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people is the simplest of mainstream values."

HRC, which spends a lot of time pressuring companies to extend special consideration to homosexuals, claimed that some 62 percent of Fortune 500 companies already offer domestic partner benefits, according to [USA Today](#). Walmart, with 1.3 million employees, is representative of large companies that are being compelled through government policy into extending benefits to workers with same-sex partners.

In her memo to Walmart executives, Welborn conceded that "given the diverse world we live in today, a comprehensive benefits package that includes domestic partner benefits appeals to the contemporary workforce. Many companies, including most of our competitors, already offer spouse/partner benefits to their employees.

Pro-family leaders decried Walmart's announcement, noting that while promoting itself as a family-



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friendly company the retailer appears to be caving in to decidedly anti-family cultural trends. “Naturally, [we’re] disappointed,” said Tim Wildmon of the American Family Association concerning Walmart’s announcement. “It validates a lifestyle which we think corporate America should discourage rather than promote.”

In another business-related move by a Fortune 500 company, in late August United Parcel Service (UPS) responded to impending changes in the nation’s healthcare structure by announcing that it would drop company-sponsored health insurance for the working spouses of some 15,000 non-union employees. By contrast, Starbucks, which provides health insurance to employees working at least 20 hours per week, promised that it would hold the line on any such cuts, though it didn’t share its strategy for success in a domestic economy under increasing assault by federal mandates.

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