

# Hillary Clinton and Walmart Wages Sign-on Letter

Posted on April 7, 2014 by Rosemary Feurer

A group of activists affiliated with LRAN are collecting signatures on a letter urging Hillary Clinton to use her Walmart ties to help Walmart workers by raising its wages. If you are interested in signing your name, please contact Pete Davis, [PDavis@CSRL.org](mailto:PDavis@CSRL.org).

---

Hillary Clinton  
15 Old House Lane,  
Chappaqua, NY 10514

March 27, 2014

Dear Hillary Clinton,

As First Lady, Senator, Secretary of State, and in your recent work with the Clinton Global Initiative, you have advocated for the cause of women's empowerment around the world. Today we write to ask you to also join us in an important women's empowerment initiative here at home. It involves an area to which you have a special connection and thus presents you, specifically, with an important responsibility to make a difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of American women.

The Walmart Corporation is the largest employer in the United States, employing about one in every hundred Americans. Unfortunately, America's largest employer sets a horrible example with its miserly wage policy. **Walmart pays hundreds of thousands of their workers less per hour, adjusted for inflation, than *minimum wage* workers made 46 years ago.** With rising housing, health and transportation costs, Walmart workers cannot make ends meet on less than \$10, \$9 or even, for some, \$8 an hour. The cashiers and hourly sales associates at the White Plains Walmart close to your house, for example, live in a city with a living wage of as estimated by the MIT Living Wage Calculator \$13.05, but most hourly Walmart workers are paid thousands of dollars per year below that standard. It's no

surprise that one Walmart manager even admitted this disconnect between Walmart pay and fair pay by placing a bin out last holiday season to solicit donations from customers for his own needy workers.

**Seventy percent of the positions subject to Walmart's hourly poverty wage regime are held by women.** Most of these women are managed by men, who despite making up a minority of the company's employees make up a majority of Walmart's managers and officials. Irregular schedules and a miserly sick day policy make Walmart a difficult place for mothers to work. Take as an example one 33-year-old mother of two featured on ABC News a few years ago: she had to leave her daughter at home with a 103 degree fever because she was worried about her three sick day "demerits" issued by her Walmart manager. Worse over, Walmart's poverty wage regime drives down the wages and benefits of neighboring stores, again disproportionately hurting women, who make up the majority of the low-wage workforce in America.

**Walmart could end this assault on their female "associates" by paying all their workers at least \$10.92**, which is the inflation-adjusted wage that the lowest paid Walmart workers under their founder, Sam Walton earned in the late 1960's. Before Walton's billionaire heirs cry *'Impossible!'*, remember: (1) Walmart pays all their workers in Ontario, Canada and Santa Fe, New Mexico over \$10 an hour and still remains quite profitable; (2) Walmart had enough funds to issue \$51 billion in stock buybacks over the past five years, which could have given every American Walmart worker a \$3.50 per hour raise over the past five years; and (3) a 2011 U.C. Berkeley economic study showed that even if Walmart raised its starting wage to \$12 and passed all the costs onto customers, it would only cost Walmart shoppers 46 cents more per shopping trip.

In 1986, when Bill Clinton was governor of Arkansas, you reflected a single case of women's empowerment at Walmart by becoming Walmart's first female director. During your six years as a Walmart board member, you honorably pushed for women's empowerment. Twenty eight years later, **we are asking you to make far broader history again for women at Walmart by publicly pressuring your former board to end its poverty wage regime and restore the wages of hundreds of thousands of its female associates.**

Here are four ways you can immediately activate your deep Walmart ties to help this important feminist cause:

1. Publicly encourage **former Walmart CEO H. Lee Scott**, who had dinner at your home in 2006, to build on his minimum wage raise support from nine years ago by urging his

successor C. Douglas McMillon to follow in his footsteps by endorsing a minimum wage raise this year.

2. Publicly encourage **Alice Walton**, the Walmart heiress who donated \$25,000 to Ready for Hillary last year, to use her power as a major shareholder to force a raise in the wages of the hundreds of thousands of Walmart associates who make less in a year of work than Walton does in 10 minutes from interest on her inheritance.

3. Publicly encourage **Clinton administration advisor Leslie Dach**, who you have worked with on labor issues recently, to leverage his role as a former Walmart executive vice president to pressure his successors to end Walmart's poverty wage regime.

4. Publicly encourage **Walmart director Aida Alverez**, who campaigned for you and was your husband's final Small Business Administration leader, to coordinate with other social justice minded Walmart directors such as former Detroit mayor **Dennis Archer** and civil rights activist **Vilma Martinez** to end Walmart's poverty wage regime.

Campaign funders like Alice Walton might be 'Ready for Hillary' to run for President in 2016, but Walmart's women have been 'Ready for Hillary' to stand up for the wages they deserve this year. It would be a shame to have your trailblazing legacy of Walmart women empowerment rolled back. We hope you can keep it alive by pressuring your former Walmart colleagues to raise the wages of its predominantly female hourly workforce to \$11, their inflation-adjusted 1968 level. This is no big deal: the workers have more than earned an \$11 per hour wage, had it taken from them by inflation year after year, and will continue to until they can catch up with 1968, inflation adjusted.

## Author



[Rosemary Feurer](#)

Rosemary Feurer is Professor of History at Northern Illinois University. She is the author of *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900-1950*, among other books and essays. She is working on *The Illinois Mine Wars, 1860-1940* and a new biography of Mary Harris "Mother" Jones.

