

Wake-Up Wal-Mart and the Portland Sweatfree Campaign Team Up to Advocate for Labor-Friendly Use of Taxes

For Immediate Release

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When: Tax Day, April 17, 2007

11-1:30 AM, 5-7 PM, and throughout the day

Where: Central Post Office, 715 NW Hoyt St.

What: Wake-up Wal-Mart and the Portland Sweatfree Campaign will leaflet and demonstrate the human face of labor exploitation through a sweatshop simulation on Tax Day. Both groups believe that taxes should support labor rights, not exploitation of workers.

Wake-up Wal-Mart will educate the public about how tax dollars subsidize Wal-Mart's growth at the expense of their employees. A substantial number of Wal-Mart Associates earn far below the poverty line and many qualify for benefits such as free and reduced lunches and low-income housing assistance. To date Wal-Mart has received at least \$1 Billion in subsidies from state and local governments. "Our tax dollars should not subsidize Wal-Mart's exploitation of their workers," said Gene Pronovost, President of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555.

The Portland Sweatfree Coalition will organize a sweatshop simulation to make taxpayers question appropriate use of their tax dollars. The Portland Sweatfree Campaign is urging Portland City Council to pass an ordinance that would require all city contractors, subcontractors and vendors to sign a code to certify that goods sold to the city are produced in a manner that meets basic labor and human rights standards. "The goal of this ordinance is to ensure that no taxpayer dollars are supporting sweatshop exploitation," state Sweatfree Campaign Coordinator Deborah Schwartz.

Who: Wake-up Wal-Mart is a national campaign that educates people about the social cost of Wal-Mart. Wake-Up Wal-Mart engages grassroots leaders, community groups and activists to "wake-up" to Wal-Mart's negative impact on our jobs, our wages, our health care and our communities.

The Portland Sweatfree Campaign is a collation effort of over 40 different labor, faith, community, political and student groups that are urging the City of Portland to adopt a sweatshop-free procurement policy.