

Walmart Rebuffed: Take note Oz (Coles) Supermarket Chain

by Sarah Lazare via Coles shopper *Friday, Jul 12 2013, 2:24am*

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Living Wage Victory Over Wal-Mart Corporate Bullying

The Washington DC city council passed a 'living-wage' bill Wednesday, rebuffing [Wal-Mart's virulent public opposition](#) to the legislation, which included a Tuesday [op-ed](#) in the Washington Post in which the retail giant declared it will pack its bags and leave the city before it pays humane wages.

"We are very happy that the council went through and passed the bill yesterday," Mike Wilson of Respect DC—a coalition of over 30 workers' rights, environmental, inter-faith, and community organizations—told Common Dreams. "This will be a big boost for DC retail workers and prevent the race to the bottom of large multinationals."

"If [Wal-Mart] is so committed to paying poverty wages they don't want to be here, that's their decision," he added.

Wal-Mart officials speaking after the bill passed city council alleged they will reverse plans to build six mega-stores as a result of the decision. The Washington Post reports:

"Nothing has changed from our perspective," Wal-Mart spokesman Steven Restivo said in a statement after the vote, reiterating that the company will abandon plans for three unbuilt stores and "review the financial and legal implications" of not opening three others under construction.

The bill mandates that city retailers—with buildings greater than 75,000 square feet and with corporate sales over one billion dollars—pay an elevated minimum wage of \$12.50 an hour.

After passing city council, it next heads to the desk of Mayor Vincent Gray, who has the final power to sign the legislation into law.

Supporters of the bill say it makes a small but meaningful dent in the poverty, wage disparity, and social inequalities gripping the city.

Since 2010, Wal-Mart has publicly moved forward with plans to build six mega-stores in Washington DC. In the days leading up to the city hall vote, the retail giant issued a public ultimatum, declaring 'it's us or the living-wage legislation.'

The dozens of community and labor organizations with Respect DC have been organizing against Wal-Mart's poverty wages since its 2010 public bid. When the retail giant refused to enter into a 'community bargaining agreement' with Washington DC residents to ensure basic human rights standards in the workplace, hopes turned to the living-wage bill introduced in January of this year.

Similar living-wage bills have been introduced since 2004, but failed to gain necessary traction. Worker and community advocates are thrilled that their months of organizing public support have brought the bill this far.

"We are happy the city council was not intimidated by Wal-Mart's threats and decided to stand strong with the workers," said Wilson. "Now we hope the mayor does the right thing."

Meanwhile, large retail workers are not the only ones in DC demanding a living wage. Hundreds of federally contracted workers, including food court workers at two Smithsonian museums, are on strike demanding that Obama sign legislation for a living wage for the workers who, literally, make the hill run by "greeting visitors and selling memorabilia at the Smithsonian Museums, driving trucks hauling federally-owned loads and making military uniforms for our troops," according to a Good Jobs Nation statement.

The city-wide mobilizations for living wages come amidst reports that the economic recession has [eroded wages](#), job security, and full-time work across the country.

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[If (Oz) Coles supermarket chain continues to model itself on Walmart arrogance and disrespect they can expect similar industrial and civil action.]

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