

Wal-Mart Takes on Wall Street

Whether people like or hate Wal-mart, the large retail chain store, there is one thing they do agree on. Wal-mart has cornered the market on merchandising products that average middle class American families can afford. Widely criticized for putting "mom and pop places" out of business and not paying their employees fair wages, the company has undergone a lot of scrutiny over the last few years, and now they are gearing up to be under the watchful eye of America once more.

Wal-Mart is ready to take on Wall Street, as company executives try to enter the store into the banking business! An attempt in 1999 to purchase an Oklahoma Savings and Loan was met with a negative result by Congress. People are afraid that if Wal-mart enters into the world of banking, smaller banks won't be able to compete with the amenities they offer. Opponents of the plan include Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, who ironically once sat on Wal-Mart's board, but feels it wouldn't be prudent to remind people of those ties with an election year closing in on her ...

Those who support the idea point out that Wal-mart would do for the average American's banking needs what it does for their retail needs. It would make banking available for the little people that big banks tend to overlook. Right now, most banks force lower income families (i.e. those that can't afford to carry big balances in their checking accounts) to pay higher than normal fees.

Wal-mart isn't trying to become a full-fledged bank. They gave up on that idea the last time they were rejected in their attempts. They simply want to apply for a charter that will help them reduce their credit card fees. At present the company offers a check cashing service that costs patrons \$3 to have a check cashed. While this may seem a bit expensive, it is much cheaper than the percentage fees that most check cashing businesses charge.

Started in Rogers, Arkansas in 1962, by Sam Walton, Wal-Mart is the largest retailer in the world. Wal-Mart is the largest private employer in the United States, Mexico and Canada. It also has given back to shareholders over 180,000% in total returns since it went public in 1972. There should be no wonder that several Walton heirs feature on Forbes' list of billionaires; they include Christy Walton, Jim Walton, S. Robson Walton, Alice Walton, and Helen Walton who all hover around a net worth of \$16 billion.

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