

November 10, 2008

Dear Voice of the People:

The Chicago Tribune continues to unabashedly push Walmart's agenda to dominate Chicago's marketplace in its latest editorial on the subject: *Grocer-in-waiting*, November 8, 2008.

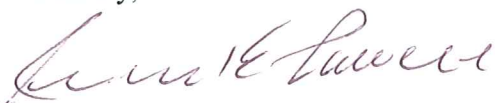
Local 881 of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) believes it is possible to secure commitments from grocery companies that will supply Chicago area residents with quality jobs, healthy food, and safe products. The Tribune has deemed Walmart the default solution; but the unchecked expansion of Walmart throughout the City of Chicago would be detrimental to the existing economy through lower quality jobs, less access to health care, and the insatiable nature of Walmart's business practices.

Earlier this year, the Tribune reported on a study conducted by Loyola University and University of Illinois at Chicago that found 12 percent of businesses within a three-mile radius of Wal-Mart's store have shut down because of Walmart. In addition to groceries, the now closed retailers sold clothing, beauty supplies, shoes, furniture, and auto parts to the community. This study reveals that consumer options are actually being limited by Walmart's Chicago presence, rather than expanded.

Walmart, a multi-billion dollar company, has a well-documented history of relying on taxpayer-funded programs to bridge the gaps for its workers low wages and minimal benefits. That is an unacceptable standard at a time when the city, county, state, and federal governments are facing severe deficits. It is both necessary and prudent for companies to provide workers with livable wages and comprehensive benefits; the world's largest retailer should be held to a higher standard for our communities, rather than taking advantage of underserved residents. Chicago continues to have an unprecedented opportunity to negotiate the terms by which Walmart does business in the city.

This debate is not simply because Walmart is notoriously anti-union, it is because of Walmart's track record of destruction throughout small towns, booming suburbs, and our global economy. Chicago is not the only skeptic of Walmart's promises and the potential risks of their expansion; other major cities such as New York have successfully fought against Walmart and its business model. Chicago should not enable Walmart to expand within the city limits until they agree to raise the standard of living in our communities rather than drive it down.

Sincerely,



Ronald E. Powell
President, Local 881 and
UFCW International Vice President