The politics of red, Wal-Mart and blue

As the world's biggest retailer fights criticism from unions and others, the battle takes on political tones.

By MARSHAL ALBRIGHT

BENTONVILLE, Ark. — Sam Walton, founder of the world's biggest retail empire, had little interest in politics. He often contributed to both sides in elections to ensure he would need a favor. These days, his heirs and a new generation managing the country's largest private employer find themselves knee-deep in partisan politics.

A growing middle-class revival over Wal-Mart Stores Inc. has developed into its own special role state and party politics. The spin doctors describing Wal-Mart either as a company that embodies the American entrepreneurial spirit and renews hard work, or a greedy corporation that日趋 of corporate welfare and its workers' relative poverty.

For organized labor, a backlash of the Democratic Party, attacking corporate Wal-Mart, has been working in its favor. It is winning big victories in the Bush White House, Royal, introducing new mandates and cooperative policies.

Last week, reaction to the relentless spread of Wal-Mart echoed across the political spectrum from Bush lymphoma to the Maryland's congressman.

Lawmakers in Annapolis agreed to require that any private employer of more than 10 people — Wal-Mart happens to be the only one to qualify — raise their minimum wage to at least 16 percent of poverty, a move the company says is both too hard and expensive. But too many lawmakers Wal-Mart workers rely on Medicaid for health care are considering similar measures.

Meanwhile, in many city halls and courthouses, plans are being hatched to impose outright bans on such high-stakes stores — not for aesthetic reasons or public safety, but for the economic reasons.
RISKY BUSINESS: A SPECIAL REPORT

Governor disputes Times’ findings

A statement from John Ash's office said, "...significant development is a long-term strategy.

The statement went on to say that the governor had been "...doing all that can be done to prepare..."

In a statement, the governor said, "...our policy is to..."

The Times, however, found that....

Business from AAA

AAA has been called on by several organizations to address issues related to increased traffic and congestion. The organization has been working on solutions to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion on major roads and highways.

Florida Wages: A Decade Later, Still Behind

Despite the state's economic growth and increased job opportunities, wages in Florida have not kept pace with the national average.

UNIFORM PROMISES

Two of Florida's incentive programs, the Qualified Target Industry Tax Refund and the Qualified Transportation and Logistics Incentives Tax Refund, have been criticized for not meeting their goals. The programs were designed to attract businesses to the state, but critics say they have not lived up to expectations.

For more information on the incentive programs and their impact, visit the Florida Department of Revenue's website.

For a list of current incentive programs and information on how to apply, visit the Florida Office of Economic and Workforce Development's website.