



Wal-Mart Signs On To Employer Mandate

By [Brian Beutler](#) - July 1, 2009, 1:00PM

Despite being the largest member of the Chamber of Commerce, Wal-Mart isn't normally seen as a major obstacle to broader health care reform efforts. But their announcement yesterday was nonetheless surprising: They support a mandate that would require employers to provide insurance to their employees.

You can see their letter, co-signed by SEIU president Andy Stern and Center for American Progress president John Podesta [here](#).

I've put out some calls on this, and hope to have more soon, but a few things to keep in mind.

1. Most of Wal-Mart's employees already have coverage of some kind--but that has a lot to do with Wal-Mart's ability to cherry pick employees who have outside coverage of some sort.
2. Wal-Mart could be jockeying for marginal advantage over their larger competitors. See [here](#) and [here](#) for how that might work. Whatever you (or Wal-Mart) think about the merits of the policy, that's shrewd business. And Wal-Mart is nothing if not shrewd about its business. Keep in mind that the Chamber of Commerce is still strongly opposed to this measure.
3. From the White House side of things, having Wal-Mart on board with health care reform could be a major boon to passing legislation. Keep in mind that Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) is a Finance Committee member who opposes a public option

Those are some preliminary thoughts, but I'll be looking deeper into this development.