

Walmart Must Act

WalmartMustAct.org / #WalmartMustAct

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Christen Dobson & Marti Flacks
Business & Human Rights Resource Centre
120 Wall Street, 16th Floor New York, NY 10005

Christen and Marti,

Thank you for including our #WalmartMustAct campaign on your site and for eliciting a response from the Walmart corporation.

We recognize and applaud Walmart for taking significant steps to limit the availability of firearms in its stores. We're glad that the company recognizes that reducing access to firearms is essential for keeping its employees and customers safe and for maintaining prosperous communities.

In fact, Walmart's consistent leadership on this issue and its willingness to go beyond existing federal law governing firearm sales suggests that the company is truly committed to, as Walmart SVP Katherine Neebe put it, "foster an inclusive environment where all people are valued and welcomed."

However, given our nation's loose gun laws, our federal government's inability to keep us safe from more than 40,000 deaths by guns annually, and the spike in hate crimes against communities of color, we are calling on the Walmart corporation to go further.

Walmart should go further because it has an obligation to keep its workers -- and its customers -- safe. As a nation, we have far too many firearms and they are far too easy to get. We know from our own opinion research that a majority of Americans feel less safe when people are carrying guns in public spaces. And academic studies have consistently shown that the presence of firearms increases the likelihood of gun violence.

Walmart has a responsibility to ensure that its business practices are not a threat to public safety. That means it must take basic steps like outlawing open carry in its stores while also ending gun sales until we raise the standard for gun ownership in America, re-evaluate political giving to lawmakers and candidates who take money from the NRA, and use its lobbying clout and political relationships to actively advocate for gun reform.

These steps will not only reduce our gun violence epidemic. They will also break the political logjam surrounding this issue and bring about reforms that an overwhelming majority of Americans -- including Walmart customers -- support.

The Walmart corporation is the largest retailer in the world. If it leans into safety, it will send a strong and unmistakable signal to federal and state lawmakers that the nation's loudest business voice has their back in the fight for our safety.

The Walmart Must Act Coalition

Guns Down America, Color of Change, March For Our Lives, AFT, Women's March, Latino Victory, MoveOn, Daily Kos, People For The American Way, Change The Ref, Orange Ribbons For Jaime

Contact information: coalition@walmartmustact.org

According to data from the Gun Violence Archive, since March 2016, the Walmart corporation has experienced over 500 incidents of gun violence in, near, or around its stores, resulting in over 137 deaths and 217 injuries. In fact, Walmart ammunition was used in the 2016 mass shooting in Orlando, FL that left 49 dead, and, in the 2011 shooting that targeted former Rep. Gabby Giffords.

Since the tragic shooting at a Walmart in El Paso, we've also seen news reports of multiple evacuations at Walmart stores, threats of violence against Walmarts, and at least 16 new gun violence incidents, including one death in Irvine, California.

In towns across America, Walmart serves as the default town square. But the rise in hate speech, hate crimes, and the easy accessibility of firearms, threatens the safety of those squares and means that Walmart will likely continue to experience more shootings in the days to come. Unfortunately, black and brown communities are targeted by both white supremacist terrorists and inter-community violence. With almost 12,000 gun murders per year in the US, most of those young Black and Latino males, it's crucial for Walmart to do everything in its power to help lead on this issue.

Retail experts estimate that Walmart's existing business relationships with the gun industry earns the corporation at least \$220 million a year in gun sales. These relationships also enrich the very same gun manufacturers that are producing firearms of ever increasing lethality. Assault-style rifles, semi-automatic pistols, and high capacity magazines are designed to kill as many people as efficiently as possible and have only worsened our gun violence crisis. While Walmart rightly doesn't sell these most lethal firearms, it does continue to engage in business relationships that help those companies prosper. That must end.

In her letter to you, Walmart SVP Katherine Neebe closed by saying, "By far, our number one priority is safety. Sales and profit are not driving our decisions here." We hope that the Walmart corporation lives up to these words and decides to do everything it can to help our nation build safer communities with fewer guns.

Sincerely,

Igor Volsky
Executive Director
Guns Down America

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