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Wage Wars: Wal-Mart Wins Some in Montgomery County, Loses Out in DC

DC's council approved a bill that effectively kill Walmart's plan for three of six new stores in the city, while Montgomery County Council voted to fast-track an Aspen Hill store.

Posted by [Whitney Teal](#) (Editor), July 11, 2013 at 10:13 pm



A Montgomery County man supports a big box bill in 2011.

Credit Esther French

While Wal-Mart may be king in more rural and suburban areas, the discount retailer is relatively small potatoes in the Washington, DC region. There are a smattering of locations in the suburbs, only one of which is inside the Beltway, and none in the District.

Opponents of the retailer's push into Montgomery County and DC often cite [Wal-Mart's low wages and no-union policy](#) as unsavory business practices not wanted in those areas.

Both jurisdictions have passed legislation aimed at the retailer in recent months.

A majority of the DC Council voted Wednesday to approve a living wage bill that requires big companies to pay 50 percent more than the city minimum wage, [The Washington Post reported](#). Wal-Mart said prior to the vote it will pull plans for three DC stores and re-evaluate three additional stores already under construction if the law was passed.

"We're at a point where we don't need retailers. Retailers need us," said Councilman Vincent Orange (D-At large), [according to The Post](#).

The DC vote comes two months after the Montgomery County Council voted to fast-track a master plan amendment allowing Wal-Mart to build a store on an abandoned lot in Aspen Hill, [The Gazette reported](#). Council members on the losing side of the 5-4 vote wanted to wait for a more comprehensive review of the community before voting.

“I think that this fight’s not over,” Matthew Hanson, campaign coordinator for Raise Maryland, an organization lobbying for a higher minimum wage, [told the newspaper](#). “We’re going to continue to organize and mobilize and if we don’t want to see another Walmart open up, depress wages and put more folks out of work, [then] we have to keep up the fight.”

Labor activists [protested plans for the store at a rally at the County Council building](#) in May.

Meanwhile, [some Aspen Hill business owners have said they wouldn’t mind having a Walmart as a neighbor](#).

A bill that [would have forced big-box retailers to give back to local communities](#) fizzled two years ago in the Montgomery County Council.