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Wal-Mart employees rally in Landover Hills

Workers pushing for union representation

by Lindsey Robbins | Staff Writer

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Wal-Mart employees gathered in Landover Hills this week to continue their push for union representation and announce that their campaign to organize Washington, D.C., area stores is gaining momentum.

Numerous elected Prince George's County officials attended the event to support store employees' right to a free and fair choice over union representation.

Wal-Mart reported \$13.4 billion in profits in the fiscal year ended Jan. 31, up from \$12.7 billion the previous year, according to a company filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission. But the retail giant continues to pay low wages and offer medical insurance that's too expensive for its employees to afford, according to a statement from Local 400 of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, which represents 35,000 members in the retail, health and food industries in Maryland, Virginia, Washington, D.C., West Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky.

"In this tight economy, one of the rare shiny aspects has been Wal-Mart," said Mark Federici of Local 400. "Employees don't know where they fit in. They're asking, 'Why am I not living better if the company's doing so well?'"

Allies of the Wal-Mart employees also pledged to make the company's treatment of its workers a major issue at today's shareholders meeting in Arkansas, the statement said.

Whether events such as this week's rally continue depends on how things play out for Wal-Mart and its employees, Federici said.

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