
WILDERNESS BATTLEFIELD COALITION

December 10, 2008

Mr. Lee Scott, President and CEO
Walmart Stores, Inc.
702 SW 8th Street
Bentonville, Arkansas 72716-8611

Dear Mr. Scott:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Wilderness Battlefield Coalition, a group of eight regional and national organizations with hundreds of thousands of members across the country dedicated to protecting the historic integrity of the Wilderness Battlefield in Orange County, Va.

As detailed in our July 8, 2008 communication with you and subsequent correspondence with designated Walmart officials in Virginia, the Coalition remains deeply concerned by the supercenter proposed for construction adjacent to the battlefield. With an official application for construction at this site filed with the county late last week, we feel it is our duty to demonstrate the extent of opposition to the chosen location.

Enclosed you will find correspondence from 253 American historians, each urging you to protect the Wilderness Battlefield for future generations by finding an alternate location nearby for the new supercenter. These men and women are true scholars, and among them are many of the foremost experts on the battle and the war itself. They write to you out of their love for history and special understanding of the evocative power of historic shrines such as the Wilderness Battlefield.

For your convenience, we have arranged the letters alphabetically. Among the enclosed, you will find correspondence from: Edwin C. Bearss, Chief Historian *Emeritus* of the National Park Service; Ken Burns, Emmy Award-winning documentarian; William C. Davis, program director at Virginia Tech's Virginia Center for Civil War Studies; Gary Gallagher, the John L. Nau, III Professor in the History of the American Civil War at University of Virginia and author of *The Wilderness Campaign*; David McCullough, two time Pulitzer Prize winner for *Truman* and *John Adams*; James McPherson, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Battle Cry of Freedom*; Gordon Rhea, author of *The Battle of the Wilderness* and *In the Footsteps of Grant and Lee: The Wilderness through Cold Harbor*; James I. Robertson, author of *Civil War Virginia: Battleground for a Nation*; and dozens of others highly respected within the field.

These scholars, like the member groups of the Wilderness Battlefield Coalition, feel strongly that the juxtaposition of a Walmart supercenter immediately adjacent to a national park is inappropriate, particularly since it would stand at the literal gateway to the park, dwarfing the limited commercial development present in the area. Virtually every reverent visitor to this hallowed ground will pass under its shadow. Further, a Walmart Supercenter at this location

would encourage other significant developments nearby, creating traffic concerns within the national park and ultimately damaging fragile historic resources.

While we fully understand that Walmart is a business venture and seeks to expand into communities where it projects financial gain, we are greatly dismayed by comments made by corporation spokespersons regarding this particular location at public meetings and in the media. These statements indicate that Walmart will not consider other locations in Orange County, regardless of the outpouring of public concern for the battlefield. The inclusion of plaques or other interpretive media within the store simply cannot compensate for the destruction of the historic ground itself, nor can it have any impact on the degradation of the park visitor experience that large-scale development will inherently produce.

As the ultimate authority within Walmart, we ask you to pursue an alternate location for your Orange County, Va., store. The Wilderness is hallowed ground soaked with the blood of nearly 29,000 American soldiers whose memory we must respect and honor. The land currently targeted, while lying outside the current boundary of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, was identified as within the battlefield's historic boundaries by a Congressionally authorized blue ribbon panel of expert historians.

Once more, let us reiterate that we only desire Walmart to pursue an alternate location elsewhere in Orange County. The land where Civil War battles occurred is our last tangible link to the momentous events of this tumultuous past. It is our sincere hope that it will remain thus for future generations to visit and learn about the sacrifices made for the freedoms we enjoy today.

As always, thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Lighthizer', written over a horizontal line.

James Lighthizer, President
Civil War Preservation Trust

cc: The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary of the Interior
The Honorable James Webb, United States Senate
The Honorable John Warner, United States Senate
The Honorable Eric Cantor, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Tim Kaine, Governor of Virginia
The Honorable Bill Howell, Speaker of the Virginia House
The Honorable Edd Houck, Virginia State Senate
The Honorable Ed Scott, Virginia House of Delegates
The Honorable Kathleen Kilpatrick, Virginia Director of Historic Resources
Thomas C. Kleine, Esq., Troutman Sanders LLP