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“Wal-Mart Endorses Obama Health Care”

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**Dennis Kneale:** The dog pound is in the house and we are barking about health care. We've got Dana Milbank from the *Washington Post*, Nancy Skinner, national radio host, Peter Flaherty is with the National Legal and Policy Center and Julie Roginsky is back, a Democratic strategist. I just had a good fight with her the other night. All right first up guys, we are going to talk Obama care. We are going to talk Wal-Mart, strange change of the leopard's spots when they came out today and said by golly we actually like the idea of every employer just about everywhere being forced to cover their employee's health care. Julie Roginsky, what a wonderful, wonderful plan the Obamaites have now. I mean, jeeze, they are going to first of all they are going to get every employer has to cover their employees, but then, they are going to tax the employer benefits so you both have to provide the service and then you have to pay a new tax on it. It is brilliant Julie.

**Julie Roginsky:** Well conspiracy theory Dennis, let me get some facts out there. First and foremost it is not going to cover, I don't think the plan is to make a mandate for every small, for every business. For example small businesses may be exempted.

**Dennis Kneale:** Ok, still...

**Julie Roginsky:** I am very happy to see that big business like Wal-Mart is jumping on the bandwagon. I think that is fabulous. Secondly, the Obama Administration has not said they are taxing health care benefits. They said they may be open to some taxation of health care benefits and only above a certain cap, which is a lot different from what John McCain was proposing last year during the campaign.

**Dennis Kneale:** Ok, Peter, what do you think of this?

**Peter Flaherty:** Well some people were surprised by this move. I was not. We have chronicled Wal-Mart's steady move to the left for the last three years. We put out a special report on it three years ago.

**Dennis Kneale:** Is this just a simplest move. They are getting out in front of this. They know it is inevitable anyway?

**Peter Flaherty:** No, no, no. In 2007, Lee Scott, Wal-Mart's CEO held a joint press conference with Andy Stern, the boss of the SEIU Union and called for universal health care. So there is nothing new here. What Wal-Mart has done is that they have been sold a bill of goods by some high priced consultants that if they appease the union and adopt their agenda, the unions will go easy on Wal-Mart. And it is just not going to happen. Andrew Stern is not going to be happy until every Wal-Mart employee is unionized.

**Dennis Kneale:** Nancy, that strategy did not work so well for car makers in Detroit. Did it where you are from?

**Nancy Skinner:** Well obviously that has been a big issue. That is the question is health care. Absolutely the auto industry has been saying health care. But before you do cart wheels over Wal-Mart, or think their some squishy liberal organization, Peter.

**Peter Flaherty:** They are indeed.

**Julie Roginsky:** They are not.

**Nancy Skinner:** They have been...let me finish. They have been trying to get their employees on public aid for a long time because they didn't pay them enough. They wrote memos about how to apply for public assistance. Listen, Wal-Mart got to be the biggest retailer in America because of economies of scale, cost cutting and competition. And those are all elements in the Obama plan.

**Peter Flaherty:** No, no no...

**Julie Roginsky:** Peter, Peter, can I just...

**Peter Flaherty:** They became as big as they are because of Sam Walton's entrepreneurial vision. They are now in favor of cap and trade. They are supporting gay marriage. They are supporting a whole host of liberal causes that they wouldn't have several years ago.

**Julie Roginsky:** Wait a second, even Wal-Mart...Peter, please. Even Wal-Mart,

**Dennis Kneale:** Hang on. Lets get to Dana Milbank with the *Washington Post* who is patiently waiting. Go ahead Dana.

**Dana Milbank:** I don't think we are in any danger of Ben and Jerry being overthrown here in the benevolent...

**Peter Flaherty:** Well that is a stereotype and it is wrong. It is wrong.

**Dana Milbank:** There is self interest involved here.

**Nancy Skinner:** Yes.

**Dana Milbank:** They have a larger percentage of their workforce already getting health care than their competitors do. So they see this as an advantage there. They also saw, the Senate Finance Committee and others getting ready to stick them with something worse. Potentially, a higher tax, so there are two very good reasons for self interest here. I don't think we are going to name Ben and Jerry flavors.

**Julie Roginsky:** And a good third one with all due respect is the fact that productivity will rise. Workers will be better covered. That means that worker productivity will go up. That's good for Wal-Mart. That's good for American business and it is good for competition.

**Dennis Kneale:** The thing about what you say Julie, though is the biggest problem with Obama care. They want to get the government to force this stuff to happen. I think the free market can make a lot of good things happen.

**Julie Roginsky:** The free market is leaving forty five million people uninsured. You think the free market has been doing a good job Dennis? Come on.

**Dennis Kneale:** I think that providing better health care through your company...

**Nancy Skinner:** Dennis, Dennis. The free market has not. It has proven not to.

**Julie Roginsky:** Of course.

**Nancy Skinner:** Forty seven million don't have health insurance. So let the government compete.

**Peter Flaherty:** They are not going to get it under Obama's plan either.

**Dennis Kneale:** Seventy or eighty percent of the people covered in this country are covered by employers. And that is working pretty well guys.

**Nancy Skinner:** And that is not going to change.

**Julie Roginsky:** How is that going to change Dennis?

**Peter Flaherty:** This Wal-Mart thing is a case where big business is teaming up with big government to freeze out the smaller competitors. And maybe that is at work here too.

**Dennis Kneale:** Right. Hang on guys. Stick around. We are going to come back and fight some more.