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May 9, 2006

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Mr. John F. Carter
Regional Director
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
25 Jessie Street at Ecker Square, Suite 2300
San Francisco, CA 95105

Re: Comments Regarding FDIC Application #20051977; Wal-Mart Application for Insurance and Industrial Bank Charter

Dear Mr. Carter:

I am writing to oppose the application of Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., for Federal deposit insurance coverage for an ILC charter in Utah. I am an employee of The American National Bank, a community bank located in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, and believe strongly that allowing Wal-Mart to own a bank charter and potentially open branches in its network of stores would do irreparable harm to my community and my institution, and pose a severe systemic risk to our nation's economy.

I am aware that Wal-Mart has stated that it intends to operate a limited ILC charter in Utah. I am skeptical. Their assurances that the operation will remain narrow ring hollow in the context of the company's history and corporate philosophy. This is Wal-Mart's fourth attempt to get into the banking business. Wal-Mart's CEO says he wants to grow the company and provide financial services to its customers. It is not much of a stretch to conclude that somewhere down the road, Wal-Mart will be amending its business plan to allow it to offer a full array of banking services. This must not be allowed to happen.

The economic force that Wal-Mart stores have on the economy of local communities is significant. Look around any medium to small sized town in Wisconsin where a Wal-mart store is located and you will see the community has lost several local, small businesses such as hardware stores, grocery stores and drug stores. This same pattern will repeat itself in the banking industry if the Wal-mart Bank application is approved.
The FDIC would be ill-advised to set this nation on a course that could result in the demise of the community banking industry as we know it today.

Congress has reaffirmed our nation's long standing policy against the mixing of banking and commerce, and with good reason. Mixing banking and commerce would create serious conflicts of interest and distort credit decisions. The impartial allocation of credit is the linchpin of our financial system and must be preserved. Would a Wal-Mart Bank offer credit at reasonable terms to its competitors? Would Wal-Mart require its suppliers to bank at the Wal-Mart bank?

Even more importantly, the largest company in the world owning a bank would produce a dangerous concentration of economic power and resources that would pose severe systemic risks to our economy. Think what would have happened if Enron owned a bank? Or Worldcom? It could have exposed the FDIC fund to enormous liability and pulled down our entire financial system. Our nation cannot afford to take that risk to save Wal-Mart a couple of pennies on each credit and debit card transaction.

For the sake of the community banks of our nation and the customers and communities we serve, please do not allow Wal-Mart to get into the banking business. Make a statement for fair competition and consumer choice by denying Wal-Mart's application for deposit insurance.

Sincerely, Andrew S. Bass