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## Wal-Mart helped by recall defeat

### Supercenter was main issue of election

By Christina L. Esparza Staff Writer  
San Gabriel Valley Tribune

ROSEMEAD - While Mayor Gary Taylor and Councilman Jay Imperial scored a victory when voters rejected an attempt to recall them, Wal-Mart Stores Inc. also walked away with a much-needed boost.

The nation's largest retailer spent \$300,000 backing Taylor and Imperial in Tuesday's election, campaign finance reports show. One-third of that was donated the day of the election.

Voters opposed the recall against both councilmen by an identical 59 percent to 41 percent margin.

Douglas Johnson, a fellow at the Rose Institute at Claremont McKenna College, has been keeping a watchful eye on the recall. He said Wednesday that Wal-Mart has shown it will "stand by its friends."

But the real victory for Wal-Mart is that the recall did not succeed, Johnson said. Had the outcome been different, it could have proven devastating for the retailer because of past failures at the polls, he said.

In 2004, voters in Inglewood decided to block the retailer from coming to the city. In Rosemead's March election last year, two Wal-Mart supporters were ousted and replaced with two opponents.

And the West Covina City Council voted two years ago to stop the retailer from buying a former BKK Landfill.

"It's nice for \ to have a victory," Johnson said, though he would not go as far as to say the win would ease the store's entree into other cities. "Part of this is the people \ were sick of being caught in the middle of" a tug of war between Wal-Mart and the unions.

Kevin McCall, spokesman for Wal-Mart, said in a statement that the company was pleased with the results, and went on to accuse those who pushed the recall of being outsiders.

Tuesday's vote "puts an end to the political battle instigated in large part by people who don't even live in Rosemead," McCall said.

However, recall supporters said the unions came only after the residents made their concerns known about the Supercenter coming to town.

"That's a damn lie and they knew it from the get-go," Larry Bevington, chairman of Save Our Community, said of the charge the unions pushed the recall. "They \ joined us after" the grass-roots effort started.

"They didn't want Wal-Mart anywhere," he added, "We didn't want Wal-Mart here."

Recall supporters countered that the organizations created to block the recall were "Astroturf" groups backed by Wal-Mart's hired guns.

Although the recall is over, the Wal-Mart controversy is not. Today, a judge is scheduled to hear a lawsuit against the retailer brought by the Garvey School District that alleges there are flaws in the environmental impact report that studied the store's effects on nearby Rice Elementary School.

The case is being heard in Los Angeles Superior Court in downtown Los Angeles.

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