

Obama Considers Wal-Mart Charity Chief as Budget Director

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President Obama's top candidate to run his budget office, Sylvia Mathews Burwell, is one of the nation's top corporate philanthropists and a veteran of the Clinton administration.

Burwell, 47, would be one of a growing cadre of Obama chiefs who also worked for former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin. That club includes former Office of Management and Budget directors Peter Orszag and Jack Lew.

She currently runs the Wal-Mart Foundation, which helps fund food pantries and sustainable farming in the United States as well as economic development in Africa. It also helped Hurricane Sandy victims in the Northeast, according to press releases.

Burwell has been in that job in Bentonville, Ark., for more than a year.

The foundation budget in 2010 was \$166 million, funded from Wal-Mart (WMT, Fortune 500) stores, according to a recent filing with the IRS.

The philanthropic arm of the world's biggest retailer has weathered criticism by the watchdog group the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, which in 2005 called its work "seemingly generous, but systematically self-interested." The group says the foundation does a better job of serving those with the least wealth and opportunity.

"It is undeniable that the philanthropy of Wal-Mart has improved substantially since 2005, and especially since the arrival of Sylvia Mathews Burwell," said Aaron Dorfman, the group's executive director. "However, Wal-Mart's philanthropy and business practices still has substantial room for improvement."

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