

Current Issues Monitoring Report For the week ending February 8, 2008

Red Cross

Because of a current budget crunch, the American Red Cross' national headquarters office will be cutting 1,000 jobs in the next few months. Employees will learn about the staff cutbacks in department and individual meetings. The budget problems have been attributed to several factors, including uneven fundraising and an oversized operation at its national offices in Washington. The vice president of Charity Navigator, a charity watchdog group, says that they get more feedback - both negative and positive - about the Red Cross than they do about the hundreds of other charities on their list.

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22956018/print/1/displaymode/1098/>

Same Sex Partnership

On Monday, more than 300 same-sex couples across the state of **Oregon** registered with the state as domestic partners. Monday was the first day that couples could register legally with the state under a new law which confers most of the same benefits that come with marriage.

<http://www.oregonlive.com/oregonian/stories/index.ssf?/base/news/120218552081670.xml&coll=7>

The **California** Supreme Court set a date - March 4, 2008 - to hear arguments about whether or not banning same-sex marriage is constitutional. The case is a consolidation of four lawsuits by same-sex couples and the city of San Francisco which challenge the law which defines marriage as between one man and one woman. Two private organizations that support the current definition of marriage will argue in court to defend the law. The court agreed to review the case back in December 2006 and has been preparing by reading through the court documents filed by the parties involved as well as 50 legal briefs from outside organizations. Once the court hears the arguments, a ruling is due within 90 days.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/02/07/BACPUTN95.DTL>

Wal-Mart

Our friends at Wal-Mart are getting into the health care market. Today, they unveiled plans to open 400 new health clinics nationwide by 2010. They plan to team up with local hospitals and health systems to treat minor ailments, provide health screenings, medical tests, vaccinations, basic physical exams and prescribe medications. The sites will be staffed by licensed physicians and nurses and open seven days a week. In a pilot program, Wal-Mart found that 55% of patients using its in-store clinics were uninsured. Last month, Wal-Mart said that nearly 93% of its associates have health insurance; almost 50% of them are covered through Wal-Mart's plan and the remainder are covered by a spouse's plan, Medicare, Medicaid or military benefits.

<http://www.bizjournals.com/baltimore/stories/2008/02/04/daily33.html?t=printable>