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For Immediate Release

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President Obama Praises Retailers as Part of the Health Care Solution

Arlington, VA – In a meeting today with President Obama and business leaders, top executives with Safeway and Recreational Equipment, Inc (REI) drew praise for their innovative employee health care and wellness programs, noted the Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA). Following the meeting, President Obama referred to the participants, which included REI President and CEO Sally Jewell and Safeway President and CEO Steven Burd, as “some of the best practitioners of prevention and wellness programs -- in the private sector.” (Media Availability, 5/12/09)

Safeway and REI are both members of RILA. Jewell is also a member of the RILA Board of Directors.

With a workforce of 15 million and daily contact with millions of customers, retailers know the importance of quality affordable health care in the lives of each and every American. Like many retailers, Safeway and REI have found innovative ways to provide quality affordable health care to their employees while also working to create a healthier workforce through wellness programs and other incentives.

“Across America, retailers like REI and Safeway, are pursuing a vision of bringing positive, lasting change to America’s health care system by providing employees with quality and affordable plans that best meet their needs,” said RILA President Sandy Kennedy.

Retailers are also committed to improving health care access to consumers through discount prescription programs, creative uses of health care information technology, and the quality and convenient care available at in-store and worksite clinics.

These innovative programs are possible because of the flexibility that exists under current law for employer-providers to design offerings that best meet the needs of their unique workforce. RILA is committed to working with President Obama, his administration and Congress to build upon the current employer-based health care system to expand and improve access to health care in America.

RILA promotes consumer choice and economic freedom through public policy and industry operational excellence. Its members include the largest and fastest growing companies in the retail industry -- retailers, product manufacturers, and service suppliers -- which together account for more than \$1.5 trillion in annual sales. RILA members provide millions of jobs and operate more than 100,000 stores, manufacturing facilities and distribution centers domestically and abroad.