

In Major Win Over 'Corporate Bullying,' Seattle Approves Tax on Amazon to Combat Homelessness



"We need to start a movement that says—'where will the company move to? We are fighting everywhere,'" Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant said on Monday. (Photo: Steve Ringman/The Seattle Times)

By Jake Johnson | [Common Dreams](#)

Overcoming weeks of extortionist threats and other forms of "corporate bullying" from the world's largest retailer, Seattle's City Council on Monday unanimously approved a new tax on Amazon—[which paid nothing in federal income taxes last year](#)—and other major companies in an effort to provide essential services for the homeless and combat the local housing crisis.

“As long as big business controls the wealth in society, and controls what is built and where...they will create a race to the bottom around the world.”

–Kshama Sawant, Seattle City Councilmember

Noting that the so-called “[head tax](#)” is quite modest relative to Amazon’s annual revenue and the pay of its CEO Jeff Bezos—the world’s richest man—socialist Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant argued on Monday that “even a smaller tax is a huge victory,” given the “Goliath-like clout of Amazon.”

A far more progressive and bold approach is possible, Sawant urged, if politicians refuse to limit “themselves to what’s acceptable to big biz.”

Given extortion from [@JeffBezos](#) & Goliath-like clout of [@amazon](#), even a smaller tax is huge victory & pushback on corporate bullying. BUT imagine what our movement could've won w CM's who fought w us rather than limiting themselves to what's acceptable to big biz & establishment.

– Kshama Sawant (@cmkshama) [May 14, 2018](#)

In total, the tax is expected to raise around \$47 million a year, \$13 million of which would come from Amazon, the city’s largest employer.

Warren Gunnels, policy director for Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), called Monday’s vote a “huge victory” and noted that yearly revenue from the new tax on Amazon will be roughly equivalent to what Bezos makes in an hour.

Huge victory! The \$12 million tax Amazon will pay = what [@JeffBezos](#) makes in about an hour or less. For those who opposed it remember: Your taxes are subsidizing Amazon's low

wage workers who rely on food stamps, Medicaid & public housing to make the richest man alive even richer
<https://t.co/mg6LB4exZR>

– Warren Gunnels (@GunnelsWarren) [May 15, 2018](#)

Other companies that will be hit by the tax are Starbucks, Apple, Google, and Nordstrom.

Despite the fact that the measure passed by the Seattle city council on Monday is significantly smaller than the original \$75 million a year tax proposal, Amazon continued its “[howls of protest](#)” in a statement on Monday, decrying the new tax as “disappointing” and “anti-business.”

As *Common Dreams* [reported](#) earlier this month, Amazon paused construction of a major expansion of its headquarters in Seattle pending the outcome of the tax vote and has [repeatedly threatened to leave the city](#) if it dares to demand more in taxes to fund badly needed affordable housing projects.

Speaking ahead of the City Council’s final vote on Monday, Sawant [argued](#) that “as long as big business controls the wealth in society, and controls what is built and where...they will create a race to the bottom around the world.”

“We need to start a movement that says—‘where will the company move to? We are fighting everywhere,’” Sawant said.

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