

# Amazon, Starbucks pledge \$25,000 each to campaign for referendum on Seattle head tax

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Amazon and Starbucks are among companies that have promised to cut large checks to a campaign collecting signatures for a referendum on Seattle's head tax.

Both Seattle-based global giants have pledged \$25,000 to the "No Tax on Jobs" effort, according to a report filed Wednesday with the city's elections commission.

The report covers the campaign's activity on May 17, the day before the business leaders went public about the effort. It lists 40 pledges, totaling more than \$325,000.

Vulcan, Kroger, Albertsons and Howard Wright—like Amazon and Starbucks—are listed as having made pledges of \$25,000.

Vulcan is Paul Allen's real-estate company. Kroger is the [parent company](#) for QFC and Fred Meyer. Albertsons is the parent company for Safeway.

Wright is the CEO of Seattle Hospitality Group and a partner in businesses that own and operate the Space Needle and the Sheraton Seattle Hotel.

Other well-known Seattle companies on the pledge list include Dick's Drive-In and supermarket Uwajimaya.

The City Council voted unanimously on May 14 to adopt the tax, saying it would help Seattle address homelessness. Mayor Jenny Durkan signed it into law May 16.

The tax will be \$275 per Seattle employee per year for companies that gross at least \$20 million annually in the city—an estimated 3 percent of businesses.

Scheduled to be collected starting in 2019, the tax is expected to raise about \$47 million per year through 2023.

Last year's point-in-time count—a one-night snapshot of the homeless population—tallied 11,643 people across King County. The number of people who received homeless services in 2017 was far greater than that.

"Seattle's exploding homeless population is a symptom of our city's extraordinary economic growth and astronomical home prices," SEIU Healthcare 1199NW, a union representing health-care workers, said in a statement last week.

"The corporations who are profiting most ... should rightfully pay a fair fee to address the problems they create," the statement said.

Some City Council members initially proposed a \$500-per-head tax but were blocked by their colleagues and Durkan, who signaled she would veto the legislation.

Though many businesses opposed the tax, Amazon heated up the debate and put pressure on the mayor by threatening to abandon some Seattle growth plans.

The referendum campaign is chaired by James Maiocco, chief business development officer with Pushpay, a Redmond-based tech firm.

The campaign's secretary is Saul Spady, president of an advertising [company](#) and grandson of Dick Spady, the founder of Dick's. No Tax on Jobs wants to put a referendum on the Nov. 6 ballot, Spady said last week.

To qualify for November, the campaign needs to gather 17,632 valid signatures from registered Seattle voters by mid-June.

Separate from the tax, the council passed a resolution calling for 66 percent of the tax revenue to be spent on affordable housing. Final decisions on spending for 2019 will be made when the mayor and council put together a budget this fall.

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