

Resolution to Tax Amazon and Big Business - Fund Social Housing and a Green New Deal

Proposal to Jan 25, 2020 Tax Amazon Action Conference

We, the attendees of this first Action Conference of the Tax Amazon movement affirm the following:

Our city is in the midst of the worst affordability crisis in its history. At the same time, our entire planet is in the midst of a climate crisis that threatens the very stability of human societies around the world. Amazon and other big corporations in Seattle make billions in profits annually, yet pay little to nothing in taxes. Ordinary people - disproportionately people of color - are bearing the brunt of both our housing and climate crises, while continuing to shoulder the overwhelming burden of taxation for the services we desperately need.

In last year's City Council elections, working people roundly rejected Amazon's attempts to buy City Hall while a post-election poll showed 75% support for taxing big business. In the context of deep inequality, Trump's corporate tax cuts, and a highly regressive Washington State tax system, there is growing recognition the billionaires need to pay their fair share!

This is why our Tax Amazon 2020 movement is fighting for a tax on our city's biggest corporations to fund a major expansion of social housing — publicly-owned, high quality, permanently affordable, green and energy-efficient homes for working people, built by union labor — as part of a broader Green New Deal.

We recognize that our struggle is one part of a much larger fight for social justice, housing justice, workers' rights, racial justice, LGBTQ equality, gender justice, and for an alternative to the bankrupt system of capitalism and its threat of climate catastrophe.

Our immediate task is to file a grassroots ballot initiative to Tax Amazon and big business so that we can begin collecting signatures.

We know that big business will fight tooth and nail to maintain their corporate tax haven in Seattle. Winning will require a bold, fighting strategy and message that can mobilize working and middle-class people, tech workers, students, retirees, small businesses, Amazon workers, people of color, the faith community, the LGBTQ community, and all everyday people. It requires we be unafraid to honestly call out Jeff Bezos and Amazon for their tax-dodging and bullying methods. It would be a serious mistake to base ourselves on the idea of collaboration or negotiation with Amazon and big business executives, who will fiercely oppose us as they did in 2018 and again last year. Instead we need to build a strong, united movement. Our message: Tax Amazon and big business, NOT working people!

All major decisions on this campaign will be based on grassroots democracy and made in mass Action Conferences like this one on January 25, 2020, where all members of our movement can debate and vote. At this Conference, we are also electing a Coordinating Committee to carry out the decisions of this Conference and to organize future Action Conferences. The Coordinating Committee will strive for consensus or broad agreement. Coordinating Committee members can send a designated representative in their place as needed.

The initial committee is made up of the following individuals and organizations, fully *accountable to our movement and subject to recall and re-election by future Action Conferences*:

- Kshama Sawant, socialist Seattle City Councilmember (Committee Co-Chair)
- Nikkita Oliver, Seattle People's Party* (Committee Co-Chair)
- Alec Connon, 350 Seattle
- David Parsons, UAW 4121
- Calvin Priest, Socialist Alternative
- Harris, Democratic Socialists of America
- Violet Lavatai, Tenants Union
- Katie Wilson, Transit Riders Union*
- Paula Lukaszek, WFSE 1488
- Kathy Yasi, SEIU 925*
- Scott Morrow, Nickelsville
- Reverend Angela Ying, Bethany UCC
- Logan Swan, Ironworkers 86*
- Barbara Phinney, 32nd LD Democrats*
- Margaret Cary, Working Families Party

** Personal capacity only, pending decision by the organization*

The Coordinating Committee cannot be accountable in name only — members and their organizations must play an active and committed role in building our movement. The basis of the composition of the Committee is not “shareholder democracy,” where membership is determined by cash commitments, but rather a balance reflective of our movement and representative of our fighting strategy for a strong Amazon Tax.

The Committee will establish an umbrella 501(c)4 or other structure, where funding for joint activities can be directed and managed, accountable and reported to the movement. Individual organizations will continue to fundraise and make separate expenditures to build the movement.

The following features of our grassroots ballot initiative are agreed to by this Action Conference:

- The Amazon Tax will fund social housing — all housing will be union-built, Priority Hire, energy-efficient, and green. On-site child care services will be incorporated where possible.
- The Amazon Tax will fund additional Green New Deal programs — including making existing homes green and helping to eliminate fossil fuels, with work carried out by union labor and Priority Hire. We will explore other GND program options, including transit.
- All cooperatives, nonprofits and small businesses will be excluded from the tax.

The Tax Amazon Action Conference will meet again in February. The Coordinating Committee will seek to file one or more versions of the ballot language in advance of the conference, subject to a final vote of approval by the Conference. We will need to collect 22,000 valid signatures (likely 30,000+) of registered Seattle voters by late May in order to guarantee a spot on the November ballot. If the Seattle City Council passes a strong Amazon Tax, our movement may choose not to turn in these signatures. But with this major outreach effort in front of us, and no guarantee that City Council will act, we cannot afford to wait before filing the initiative and beginning to gather signatures.

We recognize that our movement to Tax Amazon and big business can set a powerful example, and inspire working people around the country looking to fight back.