



Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google Amassing a “Lobbying Army” to Fight Potential Investigations

Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google have reportedly amassed a “lobbying army” in preparation for the upcoming anti-trust investigations and calls to break the Silicon Valley tech monopolies. The four technology giants have spent a combined \$55 million on lobbying in 2018, doubling their previous record \$27.4 million spent in 2016. Currently, the four tech titans have amassed 238 lobbyists. Big Tech’s lobbying influence extends to calls with members of Congress, advertising, funding of think-tanks, and efforts to influence President Donald Trump.

Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google have reportedly amassed a “lobbying army” as they prepare to deal with an increasing amount of antitrust investigations and calls to break up the Silicon Valley Masters of the Universe.

Although America's largest tech companies have historically stayed away from lobbying Congress, Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google have [transformed](#) into some of the largest influencers in Washington, D.C.

The four technology giants have spent a combined \$55 million on lobbying in 2018, doubling their previous record \$27.4 million spent in 2016, and some of the tech companies are spending at an even higher rate this year, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

The tech companies' rapid hiring of lobbyists arises as the House Judiciary Committee announced that it will start a "top-to-bottom" investigation of America's largest tech giants, the Donald Trump Department of Justice (DOJ) said it will [investigate](#) Google for potential antitrust violations, and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has reportedly [started](#) asking Amazon's rivals about the e-commerce giant's business practices.

Big Tech's rapidly growing influence [puts](#) these companies at relative parity with traditional lobbying powerhouses such as the defense, automobile, and banking industries.

The four tech companies have reportedly amassed 238 lobbyists for the first quarter of 2019, both in-house and contracted lobbyists;

roughly

75 percent of the lobbyists come from government offices or political campaigns.

Big Tech's lobbying influence extends to calls with members of Congress, advertising, funding of think-tanks, and efforts to influence

President Donald Trump, who has occasionally criticized Big Tech's

mentorship of conservatives and even Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos' ownership of

the establishment *Washington Post*.

Breitbart News has [reported](#) that

Google has donated to conservative think-tanks and publications such as

the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), Competitive Enterprise

Institute (CEI), the *National Review*, the Cato Institute, the American Conservative Union (ACU). Many of these institutions, such as the *National Review* and

CEI have been critical of calls to rein-in Big Tech's dominant status

and mentorship of conservative and alternative viewpoints.

Sheila Krumholz, the executive director of the Center for Responsive Politics, told the *New York Times* that these companies have ramped up their lobbying efforts.

Krumholz said, "They are no longer upstarts dipping a toe in lobbying. They have both feet in."

Big Tech also has rapidly picked up former high-level congressional staffers to increase their influence on Capitol Hill.

Facebook hired Catlin O'Neill, who worked as Rep. Nancy Pelosi's (D-CA) chief of staff, and who now works as the company's American director of public policy for the social media giant. Pelosi reportedly received nearly \$43,000 in total donations during the 2018 midterm cycle from employees and political action committees (PACs) of the Big Tech companies, each of which ranks among her top sources of campaign cash. Pelosi has typically served as a champion of Big Tech companies.

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The Amazon logo, featuring the word "amazon" in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. A curved orange arrow starts under the letter 'a' and points to the right, ending under the letter 'o'. The logo is centered between two solid black horizontal bars.

Amazon Will Pay a Whopping \$0 in Federal Taxes on \$11.2 Billion Profits. Bezos Cancels NY Campus.

Amazon is valued at \$800 billion and almost doubled its profits between 2017 and 2018 from \$5.6 billion to \$11.2 billion, but the company will pay \$0 in taxes, for the second year in a row. The Institute on Taxation and Economic noted that Amazon's tax rate is a result of Trump's tax cuts that decreased corporate tax rates from 35% to 21%, and failed to close a slew of tax loopholes that allow companies to avoid paying federal and state income taxes on almost half of their profits.

Amazon canceled its plans to expand to New York, which stood to gain 25,000 jobs and an estimated \$27 billion in tax revenue over the next two decades. New York offered the company \$3 billion in tax benefits to build a campus in the Long Island City neighborhood. Amazon supporters blame the New York State Senate for appointing a critic of the deal to a state board that had veto power, and the senate representative refused to even meet with the company.

Those wondering how many zeros [Amazon](#), which is [valued at nearly \\$800 billion](#), has to pay in federal taxes might be surprised to learn that its check to the IRS will read exactly \$0.00.

According to a [report](#) published by the Institute on Taxation

and Economic (ITEP) policy Wednesday, the [e-tail/retail/tech/entertainment](#)/everything giant won't have to pay a cent in federal taxes for the second year in a row.

This tax-free break comes even though Amazon almost doubled its U.S. profits from \$5.6 billion to \$11.2 billion between 2017 and 2018.

To top it off, Amazon actually reported a \$129 million 2018 federal income tax rebate—making its tax rate -1%.

Amazon's low (to non-existent) tax rate has been chided by politicians ranging from Senator Bernie Sanders to President Donald Trump.

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Additional

source:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/14/opinion/amazon-new-york.html>



New Amazon Facility to Be Built Near Congress in Order to Influence Lawmakers and Keep Its Monopoly

Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, which is worth \$200 billion, made two deals that will net \$2 billion in taxpayer-funded subsidies: New York will extend tax breaks of \$1.525 billion in exchange for building a large facility and providing 25,000 jobs high-paying jobs, and Virginia offered Amazon \$573 million in exchange for a guarantee of 25,000 jobs. In n 2017, [Amazon](#) made \$5.6 billion in profit and paid zero in federal income tax, and received a \$137 million tax refund!

Brian Brenberg, associate professor of business and economics at The King's College says that Bezos chose Virginia to cozy up to the rule makers in Congress so that they will give him huge tax breaks, which will put Amazon in a position where it can fend off competition for years to come. Bezos has already invested \$13 million with 100 lobbyists, and he will have 25,000 new employees in Virginia available as boots on the ground to wield influence in the halls of power. Professor Brenberg says that Bezos' goal is to stave off competition by writing the regulations, as Amazon depends on political favoritism to stay on top.

Two left-wing Democrats in America's top media centers just gave away [more than \\$2 billion](#) in tax breaks to the richest of the rich – Amazon.com.

Amazon, one of the [most valuable companies in the world](#), run by Jeff Bezos, whose \$100-plus billion in personal wealth makes him [the richest man in the world](#), has just scored a sweet deal from the states of New York and Virginia to expand there.

From New York, Amazon will receive tax breaks of \$1.525 billion in exchange for building a four million square foot facility in Long Island City that includes 25,000 jobs high-paying jobs.

Basically, it will cost the taxpayers of New York [\\$48,000](#) for each one of those jobs.

New York's governor, Andrew Cuomo, is a left-wing Democrat .

Virginia has offered Amazon \$573 million in exchange for a guarantee of 25,000 jobs.

Virginia's governor is Ralph Northam, a left-wing Democrat.

Please note that in 2017, Amazon made \$5.6 billion in profit and not only [paid zero in federal income tax](#), it received a \$137 million tax refund.

This is exactly how crony capitalism works.

Outside of the gobsmacking hypocrisy coming from the silence over this from the very same Democrats and media outlets that screamed PEOPLE WILL DIE! over President Trump's across-the-board tax cuts (that benefited all companies and working people equally), this is an almost perfect example of the hideous corporatism that infects all of the Democrat Party and way too much of the Republican Party (the Republican mayor of Arlington, VA, is raising taxes on hotel rooms for Amazon and the state of Tennessee will give away \$105 million).

Although Amazon has more than enough money to relocate wherever it wishes, although Amazon straight-up lied about using its vast wealth and this expansion to [help people](#) (it was obviously all about soaking taxpayers for as much as possible), the silent hypocrisy from the left and media (it sure helps that Jeff Bezos owns the *Washington Post!*) when it comes to politicians picking winners and losers, being controlled by Big Money, and what that means to area

residents, will continue.

What's more, how much control will these mammoth new HQs enjoy over its employees, and how will this control affect non-employees (i.e., American citizens) caught in this mammoth land grab?

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Jeff Bezos of Amazon Is Becoming Washington DC's Biggest Government Contractor

The Department of Defense invited proposals for a \$10-billion contract called JEDI, short for Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure, as they plan to move all of the DOD's data, including classified material, into one place in the cloud, instead of its current state of being strewn across 400 centers. The deal is rigged in favor of Amazon because its specifications are such that only Amazon can meet them. For example, one provision stipulates that bidders must already generate more than \$2 billion a year in commercial cloud revenues, which knocks out most of Amazon's competitors.

Amazon has spent \$67 million on lobbying since 2000, including more this year than Citigroup, JP Morgan Chase, and Wells Fargo combined. Its Washington office employs more than 100

lobbyists, including 68 officials who came there from from government employment. Anne Rung, who served as the government's chief acquisition officer, helped pass the so-called "Amazon amendment", a provision buried in a defense authorization bill that establishes Amazon as the go-to portal for every online purchase the government makes—some \$53 billion every year. It is no surprise that she now works for Amazon. -GEG

There's a new scandal quietly unfolding in Washington. It's far bigger than Housing Secretary Ben Carson buying a \$31,000 dinette set for his office, or former EPA chief Scott Pruitt deploying an aide to hunt for a deal on a used mattress. It involves the world's richest man, President Trump's favorite general, and a \$10 billion defense contract. And it may be a sign of how tech giants and Silicon Valley tycoons will dominate Washington for generations to come.

The controversy involves a plan to move all of the Defense Department's data—classified and unclassified—on to the cloud. The information is currently strewn across some 400 centers, and the Pentagon's top brass believes that consolidating it into one cloud-based system, the way the CIA did in 2013, will make it more secure and accessible. That's why, on July 26, the Defense Department issued a request for proposals called JEDI, short for Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure. Whoever winds up landing the winner-take-all contract will be awarded \$10 billion—instantly becoming one of America's biggest federal contractors.

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But when JEDI was issued, on the day Congress recessed for the summer, the deal appeared to be rigged in favor of a single provider: Amazon. According to insiders familiar with the 1,375-page request for proposal, the language contains a host of technical stipulations that only Amazon can meet, making it hard for other leading cloud-services providers to win—or even apply for—the contract. One provision, for instance,

stipulates that bidders must already generate more than \$2 billion a year in commercial cloud revenues—a “bigger is better” requirement that rules out all but a few of Amazon’s rivals.

What’s more, the process of crafting JEDI bears all the hallmarks of the swamp that Trump has vowed to drain. Though there has long been talk about the Defense Department joining the cloud, the current call for bids was put together only after Defense Secretary James Mattis hired a D.C. lobbyist who had previously consulted for Amazon. The lobbyist, Sally Donnelly, served as a top advisor to Mattis while the details of JEDI were being hammered out. During her tenure, Mattis flew to Seattle to tour Amazon’s headquarters and meet with [Jeff Bezos](#). Then, as the cloud-computing contract was being finalized, Donnelly’s former lobbying firm, SBD Advisors, was bought by an investment fund with ties to Amazon’s cloud-computing unit.

Congressional insiders who have reviewed the process question whether Donnelly violated a federal law that bars executive-branch employees from participating in government decisions that affect their personal interests. “We recently became aware of serious and possible criminal violations related to the Amazon cloud DOD contract process,” says a high-ranking congressional staffer who spoke on the condition of anonymity. “We are concerned about the implications of the appearance of conflicts of interest and impropriety related to how Pentagon personnel with close ties to Amazon may have influenced multi-billion-dollar cloud contracts.”

Donnelly, through her lawyer, denies any wrongdoing. “Ms. Donnelly sold her entire stake in SBD Advisors before setting foot in the Pentagon,” the lawyer said. “From that moment forward, she has had absolutely no financial or other interest in SBD Advisors or its clients.”

But whether or not any legal or ethical boundaries were

crossed, Amazon's high-ranking connections in the Pentagon underscore how Jeff Bezos continues to wield influence in Washington, even as the president himself rails against the online goliath. It also raises a larger question: How do you drain a swamp when the alligators are bigger than ever? "When you have that kind of access during a \$10 billion procurement, that compromises the integrity of the procurement," says John Weiler, an industry expert who runs a trade group that includes many leading IT firms. "Amazon was basically able to write the playbook."

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Amazon Is Set to Control 50% of All E-Commerce in the US, as Sales Rose 30% from Last Year

The company is forecast to hit sales of \$258.2 billion by the end of 2018, a roughly 30% increase from the previous year. Amazon captured approximately 44% of the e-commerce market in 2017. Many people, including [President Trump](#), object to Amazon's advantages from tax loopholes, its special deal with the US Postal Service and hiring foreign workers instead of Americans to save money on labor.

Amazon, the online retailing giant founded by Jeff Bezos, is fast approaching capturing 50 percent of the U.S. e-commerce market, according to data research firm eMarketer.

The company is [forecast](#) to hit sales of \$258.2 billion by the end of 2018, a roughly 30 percent increase from the previous year. Amazon captured approximately 44 percent of the e-commerce market in 2017. The online retailing giant's market share dwarfs eBay's, which currently has around 6.6 percent of all U.S. e-commerce sales. The third is Apple with 3.9 percent and Walmart in fourth places, capturing 3.7 percent of the market.

"Also striking is the fact that Amazon's marketplace is exploding – the marketplace refers to transactions that take place via third-party sellers, instead of a shopper buying one of Amazon's in-house brands. Sales generated from the marketplace will be more than double Amazon's direct sales in the U.S. by the end of the year," [reports](#) CNBC.

Analysts expect Prime Day 2018, scheduled to begin Monday afternoon, will have a major impact on the company's Q3 sales.

Amazon's monopolistic dominance across multiple industries and its use of U.S. tax loopholes have [drawn ire](#) across the political spectrum, including from President Donald Trump. "I have stated my concerns with Amazon long before the Election," he tweeted in March. "Unlike others, they pay little or no taxes to state and local governments, use our Postal System as their Delivery Boy (causing tremendous loss to the U.S.), and are putting many thousands of retailers out of business!"

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Seattle City Council Repeals Tax on Jobs to Benefit Homeless, after Big Biz Applies Pressure

Amazon, Starbucks and other large employers were able to pressure Seattle's City Council into overturning the socialist "head tax" of \$275 on each employee per year that was expected to raise \$50 million per year. The money was to help the growing homeless population. Amazon has more than 45,000 employees, and the tax would have cost the company \$12,375,000.

From the Wall Street Journal:

"The tax would have, starting next year, levied \$275 per employee on companies with more than \$20 million in annual revenue, or about 3% of Seattle-based businesses, according to the City Council. It was projected to raise about \$47 million a year, to be spent on affordable-housing and homeless services."

From KIRO Radio:

The Seattle City Council both passed and repealed its head tax in less than a month. The legislation itself and the activity surrounding it shows that it was about much more than the head

tax, according to [KIRO Nights](#). It was all about Seattle residents' relationship with the city council.

The Monday vote was 7-2 and appears to be the result of a private council meeting far from the reach of Kwasha Sawant. She alleged the repeal was the result of a [backroom betrayal](#).

"I think for the first time we saw true leadership coming from Mayor Jenny Durkan," said KIRO Radio's Zak Burns. "She gets this meeting to happen. She convinced the council members that this head tax wasn't a good idea. It's not worth angering an overwhelming majority of the businesses and citizens here."

Previously expected to raise \$47 million annually, the tax would have applied to more than 500 businesses and cost them \$275 per employee every year. A repeal campaign quickly sprang up after it passed on May 14. The [No Tax on Jobs Coalition](#) gathered 40,000 signatures and included the support of companies like Amazon, Dick's Drive-In, and Zillow, among others.

"I think Mayor Durkan realizes that all this anger had little to do with the head tax," Zak said. "This was a referendum on the city council themselves. Here they are asking for more money when they have no proven track record on past spending in terms of success."

Council members Teresa Mosqueda and Sawant were the only no votes, not entirely a surprise considering that Sawant said that "Jeff Bezos is our enemy" before the vote. Head tax supporters shouted chants that caused some council members to walk out after voting.

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Amazon's Whole Foods Market Chain Breaks Its Promise to Label GMOs

Five years ago, Whole Foods announced it would require stringent mandatory labels on GMO products. In addition, animal products would require disclosure on whether animals had been raised on GMOs. This would have forced almost all food producers to label their products. Amazon acquired Whole Foods almost a year ago and they are now going back on their promise to label GMOs, waiting for the government to come up with a policy that is confusing and imprecise, and requires a SmartPhone to read.

Nearly a year after being acquired by [Amazon](#), health food retailer Whole Foods is quietly putting the brakes on its plan to require food suppliers and stores to label foods containing genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

A spokesperson for Whole Foods told [FOX Business](#) that the company is pushing back the deadline for its mandatory GMO labeling policy as the U.S. Department of Agriculture "finalizes its Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard" to give the food industry time to assess the impact.

"We have decided to pause on our September 1, 2018 deadline for our GMO Labeling Policy," Rachel Alkon, the company spokesperson, said. "We remain committed to providing our customers with the level of transparency they want and expect

from us and will continue to require suppliers to obtain third-party verification for non-GMO claims.”

Five years ago, Whole Foods first announced its plans to adopt stringent mandatory labeling on products containing GMOs by 2018. In 2013, Walter Robb, who was then co-CEO, said in a statement that they “are putting a stake in the ground on GMO labeling to support the consumers’ right to know.”

The new policy would require that all suppliers disclose the presence of GMOs directly on product packaging. Even stricter rules would be set for animal products, requiring retailers to label whether or not animals were raised on GMOs.

The requirements are much more precise than the proposed rules set in place by the USDA in 2016. Under those rules, companies label bioengineered food with a QR (Quick Response) code, requiring customers to use a smartphone to find out what’s in their food.

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Amazon Loses \$30 Billion in One Day After Rumors Trump

May Try to Break Its Monopoly

The market value of Amazon stock plunged by \$30-billion in one day following publication of a rumor that President Trump intends to break up the company because it is cutting into the businesses of his friends. Jake Morphonios takes the position that, whether the rumor is true or not, it's a good idea to enforce anti-trust laws to break up Amazon because, otherwise, it will eventually force most retail stores out of business and will become a global monopoly. When that happens, Amazon will increase prices, leaving consumers with no choice but to pay. [We agree with this analysis up to the assertion that customers will have no other choice. That would be true only if the monopoly pays off politicians to create laws that give it advantages designed to block any future competition. This is done, not through efficient competition, but through legalized favoritism. An example would be laws to require burdensome rules and regulations that large companies can afford but which will crush start-up companies. Monopolies need the state to protect them from competition.

In a free country, citizens do not have the right to use force against their neighbors to prevent them from selling their products below cost – even if their intent is to force competitors out of business. If we do not have that authority as individuals, we cannot delegate it to politicians to do it either, regardless of how much we may like the idea. Therefore, there should be no anti-trust laws, but there CAN and SHOULD be laws against favoring one company or consortium of companies over their competitors. Under this concept of *laissez-faire*, monopolies always are challenged and broken up by their younger, more agile, more creative, more innovative, and more efficient competitors. History proves this conclusively. In the past hundred years, very few companies have lasted longer than three generations, and that includes those that, during their heydays, appeared to be unbreakable monopolies. Just make a mental list of all those great corporate names we remember from our youth that now are merely

collector's pieces in antique stores or on the walls of restaurants. In almost every case, they became so large and bureaucratic and inefficient that they could no longer compete. It's the law of nature, and we do not need politicians to make it work.] GEG

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_JlZbTWvgo