



Pennsylvania Conference of Teamsters

Strength in Numbers 95,000

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LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

DAILY NEWS ©

No union, no deal, NYC labor leaders tell Cuomo and de Blasio about Amazon's new HQ

By GINGER ADAMS OTIS JAN 28, 2019

Two New York unions are teaming up to deliver a message to retail giant Amazon: labor is still king in Queens. In a letter sent Monday to Gov. Cuomo and Mayor de Blasio, leaders from The Teamsters and the retail workers union asked that New York's \$3 billion deal with global corporation be put on hold in light of Amazon's "anti-worker" history.

Not a penny of public funds should go to the trillion-dollar online titan until it commits to a fair process for Amazon workers in Queens to unionize, the labor leaders demanded. The letters went out just ahead of a planned City Council hearing Wednesday on the financing of the Amazon deal — the second of its four scheduled discussions on the controversial agreement.

"The growth of Amazon and its low-pay jobs is a direct threat to New York workers in the core industries of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters," said the letter obtained by the Daily News.

It also cited "deadly and dehumanizing working conditions" in Amazon facilities elsewhere as a factor that both Cuomo and de Blasio — who like to burnish their labor-loving bona fides, especially in election years — should stop and consider.

Andrew Cuomo, Governor New York, left, and Bill de Blasio, Mayor, Mayor New York City smile during a press conference discussing Amazon's decision to establish one of its second headquarters in Long Island City, Queens. (Barry Williams for New York Daily / for New York Daily News)

The Seattle-based tech powerhouse announced its decision to open new headquarters in Queens in November — and promised to bring more than 25,000 high-paying jobs to the city in the coming decade.

As a nod to New York's still-strong labor movement, the company also agreed to use union workers to both build its new facility and help staff it and keep it maintained — but those terms don't quite stand up to full scrutiny, according to the Teamsters and RWDSU.

The Building Trades Council's deal to have union laborers construct the Long Island City headquarters is actually inked with third-party contractor — as is SEIU 32BJ's contract for maintenance and other services.

Amazon itself remains untouched by a direct labor agreement as part of its deal, the Teamsters and RWDSU said. "All workers deserve to be treated with dignity and respect — and that includes Amazon's workers as well. ... No public official can call themselves progressive or pro-worker or pro-union if they accept or ignore Amazon's labor record," said Stuart Appelbaum, head of RWDSU.

George Miranda, head of the Teamsters union that deals primarily with trucking, said Amazon shouldn't be getting \$3 billion in taxpayer money unless it changes its ways.

"As the company grows, it brings its poor labor practices into new industries and drives down standards for all," he said. "The Teamsters are proud to be partnering with RWDSU to ensure that the rights of Amazon workers in New York are protected."