

# THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

## **Opinion: Amazons HQ2 love affair costs taxpayers billions**

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November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018

How much would you pay for the opportunity of a lifetime? If you're New York or Virginia, the price for a ticket to the top will start around \$4 billion in taxpayer-guaranteed incentives with state tax breaks for Amazon's new North American offices.

With the promise of an estimated 50,000 new jobs between Long Island City and northern Virginia in what has been a years-long courtship with state and local governments, the process surrounding the location dubbed "HQ2" has been marred with theatrics usually reserved for a reality dating show and the secrecy of Catholic confession.

For many residents, this process didn't seem to be the white wedding they were promised by their leaders, instead seeing a shotgun wedding with politicians looking to pick up their elusive dame before anyone else could, choosing to ignore the fact that she made off with their wallets following the reception.

In the moments following Amazon's announcement, groups of people ranging from libertarians, fiscal conservatives, political action committee Generation Opportunity, and members of Americans for Prosperity along with the Cato Institute, are speaking out against what they see as another example of government waste. Congresswoman-elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York's 14th district has also criticized the decision.

Amazon has managed to become the nation's most theatrical welfare queen in the last decade, demanding egregious tax breaks, special treatment from government services and the red carpet treatment from politicians.

According to Russell Latino, former Mississippi director for the conservative group Americans for Prosperity and current vice president of the organization's Economic Freedom Portfolio, Long Island City could give each resident \$22,000, build 5,979 lane miles of road, or hire 35,294 police officers with 26,450 teachers or 38,100 firemen with Amazon's current \$1.5 billion benefits package. A \$1.5 billion Latino subsidie would make up roughly .8 percent of Amazon's revenue in 2017.

And we wonder why Americans don't trust politicians to watch out for the little guy.

In the coming months and years, Long Island City will see more families pushed from their homes as a new money elite swarm their former neighborhoods, inevitably praising it for its

working class charm, gentrifying what little spaces these historic communities have in a city where these practices have become all too common.

In Northern Virginia it will be the middle class who will suffer as an already overheated property market is propelled by Beltway refugees, who will get pushed north to the far less desirable Maryland, or further to the south and west to what once were outlier communities in order to maintain their quality of life.

Corporate welfare is nothing more than a blank check given to organizations that feel as if they're too big to fail, and it should be to the alarm of Virginians, New Yorkers and Americans as a whole that politicians allowed this deal to happen without the consultation of those who are made to foot the bill.

To the legislators in Albany and Richmond, enjoy your honeymoon. Just make sure to not check the bill until you check out.