



City of Seattle
Seattle City Council

NEWS RELEASE

Councilmember Kshama Sawant

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Councilmember Sawant Denounces Secretly-Negotiated Durkan Budget That Reverses Even Modest Reductions in Bloated Police Spending

Capitulation to Durkan and big business 'will demonstrate to the world that Seattle's Democratic establishment is unwilling to defend communities of color and working people, and will cave under big business pressure in the context of the Trump administration's dangerous threats'

SEATTLE - [Councilmember Kshama Sawant](#) (District 3, Central Seattle), chair of the Council's Sustainability and Renters Rights Committee, issued the following statement on Sept. 22 in advance of the City Council's anticipated vote later today on a new 2020 budget bill:

"Seattle's Democratic politicians are shamefully on the verge of reversing even the small reductions in police spending, the stopping of homeless sweeps, and other progressive budget amendments our movement was able to win in the August City Council budget vote.

"Rather than joining our movement in fighting to defeat corporate Mayor Durkan's shameful veto, and refusing to support a gutted budget, City Council Democrats - led by Council President Gonzalez - instead have themselves put forward a gutted budget that the Council President **secretly negotiated with Mayor Durkan!**

"Some Democrats will vote today for the veto override, even making statements denouncing Durkan, while claiming there is no alternative to supporting the gutted budget. Some may offer mild amendments to make it "palatable." But we should not be fooled. This is how the Democratic Party operates: collectively they are capitulating on even the limited gains in the August budget, but they will each play different choreographed roles in that process.

“This ‘alternate’ bill, which is being characterized as a compromise, is in fact a stunning betrayal and capitulation to Durkan, the Seattle Police Department (SPD), and big business. If this capitulation goes through, it will be a repeat of the shameful Amazon Tax repeal in 2018, which also was negotiated in secrecy and rammed through in 48 hours.

“Worse, the Democratic establishment’s backpedaling on defunding SPD will only play into the hands of the Trump administration: Trump’s attorney general on Sunday declared Seattle to be an “anarchist city” in part because of the #DefundSPD momentum here, and threatened to withhold federal funds.

“If City Council Democrats betray our movement now on even their minimal commitments to trim the police budget, it would only further embolden right-wing forces. It will demonstrate to the world that Seattle’s Democratic establishment is unwilling to defend communities of color and working people, and will cave under big business pressure in the context of the Trump administration’s dangerous threats.

“It’s no surprise that given the extent of capitulation in this legislation, working people in the last 24 hours are reacting with anger and frustration at the Democratic political establishment.

“As a socialist and rank-and-file union member accountable to working people, I will obviously vote against this shameful ‘alternative’ legislation. I call on other Councilmembers to declare their opposition as well.

“Through their votes later today, the other Councilmembers will demonstrate whether they, too, stand with working people, communities of color, and Black Lives Matter, or whether they stand with the Mayor for police brutality and cruel austerity policies; whether they stand with the Black Lives Matter movement, or will be enablers of Trump’s dangerous threats.

This ‘alternative’:

- Completely eliminates even the minor reductions in the police budget approved by Council this summer under pressure from BLM and the People’s Budget movement.
- Continues spending millions on the ineffective and inhumane sweeps of our homeless neighbors.
- Cuts by 75% the funding for community alternatives to SPD’s repressive policing.
- Eliminates all of the already-inadequate funding for Green New Deal programs - in the middle of this year’s catastrophic wildfires!
- Maintains all the austerity and budget cuts to City departments and programs that, if properly funded, could actually help address human needs.

Only two months ago, 7 of 9 councilmembers responded to the Justice for George Floyd movement by pledging to defund the police by at least 50 percent. Yet I was the only councilmember to put forward legislation that our movement was demanding - a 50%

defunding of the SPD along with investments in community needs, especially in Black and Brown communities. Now, with thousands of demonstrators no longer in the streets, Democratic politicians are preparing to capitulate on even this minimal transfer of funds from the police to community programs.

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