

## EDITORIAL



CRAIG RUTTLE

# Don't botch this delivery

New York risks losing Amazon — and a golden economic opportunity. The State Senate's leader can stop it from happening.

BY THE EDITORIAL BOARD

**W**e could be one click away from losing the largest economic boost this state has ever gotten from a single company.

We could be one click away from losing 25,000 jobs with average salaries of \$150,000 a year, \$27 billion in tax revenue in the next 25 years, and the potential for new schools, transit, housing and a burgeoning technology industry.

We could be one click away from becoming the state infamous for turning its back on business development.

After wooing Amazon and winning a bid to be one of its two new headquarters, we're doing everything we can to send it away. The company is now seriously considering withdrawing its plans for Long Island City, according to The Washington Post.

That would be disastrous for the city, the region and the state.

There is one person who can undo the damage: State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins.

Until now, Stewart-Cousins has been playing a game. And not well. While she has not taken a position on the state and city incentives — most of it future tax credits — her actions are speaking louder than her words.

Stewart-Cousins appointed her deputy, Sen. Michael Gianaris, to the Public Authorities Control Board, from

which he could single-handedly veto the deal. And Gianaris has made his position quite clear, saying the deal with Amazon is horrible, that the state should not give corporate welfare to a firm controlled by the world's richest man. Whatever Gianaris does, Stewart-Cousins now owns.

Stewart-Cousins represents more than her Westchester County district. As one of the three most powerful people in state government, she also represents the interests of the entire state. That's why she must withdraw the nomination of Gianaris to the control board. Stewart-Cousins has to make that change now if she wants to send a signal that her nominee will have an open mind and review the portion of the incentives and tax-credits deal the control board must approve: a capital grant of as much as \$505 million on the condition that Amazon invests \$3.6 billion and creates as many as 40,000 jobs over 15 years. Another \$1 billion in incentives from New York City, out of \$2.9 billion overall, would go to any developer choosing that site.

**T**here's little reason for Amazon to stay in the process and continue on a lengthy road of environmental analysis, approvals, hearings and more if company officials know that at the end, Gianaris will try to block the deal.

Sources say Amazon officials have

reached out to Gianaris for a face-to-face meeting, and he has refused. And while Gianaris has tried to backtrack a bit in recent days, it might not be enough. The board he would sit on is supposed to judge the deals it reviews based only on fiscal concerns: Does the state have the \$505 million it pledged to pay Amazon toward its \$3.6 billion construction and job commitment?

Instead, Gianaris is playing to anti-corporate voices like U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who has applauded the idea of Amazon pulling out of New York. There's speculation that Gianaris is worried about being primaried from the left by her supporters if he doesn't swing left himself. But polling shows that his district, never mind the entire city, solidly supports Amazon's HQ2 plans.

Unfortunately, Gianaris still thinks this is a knife fight with Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo.

"There's only one person to blame for this horrible drama, and that's Andrew Cuomo," Gianaris tweeted on Friday. "Here's a man who negotiated a horrible deal in complete secrecy and he's upset when people disagree with him about it."

If this past week taught us anything, it's that Amazon owner Jeff Bezos won't be bullied, and won't play other people's games. When Bezos accused American Media Inc. and its chief executive, David Pecker, of blackmail and extor-

tion over an extramarital affair, and published emails that laid out embarrassing details for all to see, it was clear he wasn't going to bow to the National Enquirer's demands.

The stakes here are high. New York's finances and economic future already are precarious, at best. A decision by Amazon to drop its Long Island City plans won't help. It would be a setback from further diversifying the region's economy with a high-performing tech sector that would lessen the dependence on Wall Street.

That's especially important for Long Island, which is trying to build its own technology corridor with a focus on life sciences and biotechnology. Amazon's presence would give the Island credibility, a chance to woo companies wanting access to a growing talent pool, and an opportunity to be part of a larger cluster of businesses. It would bring young residents to Long Island and boost its home prices.

**I**f Amazon pulls out, why would any company choose to come to the region after seeing the anti-corporate, anti-business fight it would have ahead?

The six Long Island state senators in Stewart-Cousins' Democratic caucus must make it clear to her that they support the Amazon project and know how important it is to their constituents and to the region. The new Long Island six must come together with one voice and lead here.

There's still a chance to do the right thing, to show that the state does indeed care about its economic future, and even to fight to get the infrastructure improvements the city and state want from the Amazon deal.

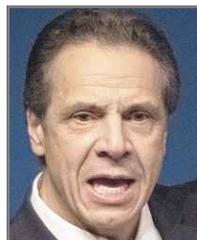
But if Amazon does choose to settle elsewhere, taking 25,000 jobs and so much more with it, expect our children and our children's children to do the same.



NEW YORK STATE



NEWSDAY/JULIA GAINES



NEWSDAY / J. CONRAD WILLIAMS JR.



AP / CLIFF OWEN

**KEY PLAYERS:** State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Deputy Majority Leader Michael Gianaris, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and Amazon owner Jeff Bezos. At top, a prop used by anti-Amazon demonstrators in Manhattan in November.