

Best Buy suspends donations to congressional members who voted against certifying election

It suspends donations to those who voted against electoral certification.

By [Jim Spencer](#) and [Kavita Kumar](#) Star Tribune January 11, 2021 — 9:20pm

Best Buy will no longer make political donations to 147 members of the U.S. Senate and House who voted against certifying the results of the 2020 presidential election.

The Fortune 500 company based in Richfield issued a brief statement Monday afternoon, six days after unsubstantiated charges of election fraud led supporters of defeated President Donald Trump to storm the U.S. Capitol.

Best Buy is among a number of companies across the U.S. — including Marriott, AT&T and American Express — that said in recent days they will suspend making contributions to that group of lawmakers in the wake of last week's events.

Companies across Minnesota are examining political donations after the riot led to five deaths — including one police officer — and vandalism of property inside the country's legislative headquarters.

Corporate political action committees — or PACs — collectively contribute tens of millions of dollars directly to candidates for Congress and the presidency in each election cycle.

Individuals denied that funding for trying to undermine the election could face additional political pushback. At a minimum, they are likely to see their votes not to certify the election as a major campaign issue if they seek re-election.

Corporations, meanwhile, may not want their brands associated with politicians who witnessed the violence and still chose to dispute the Electoral College votes that gave Democrat Joe Biden the presidency by a comfortable margin.

In Minnesota, Republican Reps. Jim Hagedorn and Michelle Fischbach voted against the certification of the votes from Arizona and Pennsylvania. Hagedorn received a \$3,000 campaign contribution from Best Buy in the 2020 election cycle and \$5,000 from Minneapolis-based U.S. Bancorp. Among large Minnesota public companies that provided information Monday, Fischbach received no donations.

Arizona and Pennsylvania were the only states whose vote counts were challenged after the rioters broke into the House and Senate chambers and shut down Congress for several hours.

Most companies that responded to a Star Tribune inquiry about donating to those who opposed certifying the presidential election results took a wait-and-see approach.

"The Medtronic PAC is currently reviewing its guidelines for political donations as it develops its contribution plan for the 2022 election cycle," company spokesman Ben Petok said in a statement. "The PAC board will make a determination about future donations once that review is completed. While that review is underway and until the new PAC contribution plan is approved, the Medtronic PAC will not make any donations to elected representatives or their leadership PACs."

Target has temporarily paused political giving. 3M has suspended political giving for the first quarter of 2021, as it studies its policies. A spokesperson for UnitedHealth Group said the company will review its policy, too, as will U.S. Bank.

"U.S. Bank has announced that as a result of the recent violence at the U.S. Capitol that it has immediately paused all giving from its political action committee," spokesman Jeff Shelman said in a statement. "The bank will review its approach to future contributions and ensure that our involvement in the political and policy process helps advance, improve and do what is right for the country, our customers and our employees."

Minnetonka-based Cargill, one of the world's largest private companies, also is reviewing its political contributions strategy.

"This unconscionable attack on democracy stands in sharp contrast to our values as a nation and company," the company said Tuesday. "Given all that has transpired in politics in recent months, culminating in last week's violence, Cargill is immediately and indefinitely suspending political contributions."

Corporations judging whether candidates do "what is right for the country," as well as what is in their customers' and employees' best interest is a tweak to political giving philosophy, said Bruce Freed, head of the Center for Political Accountability, which counsels corporations on responsible donations. But the impact depends on how companies define what is right, added Freed, whose group just produced a model code for companies to follow.

The business community "is clearly reacting to an attempted coup," Freed said. "I recognize this as a defining moment."

How long the changes will apply — or whether the PAC policy changes also apply to "dark" money contributions that do not require public disclosure — is yet to be seen, he said.

For the moment, though, attention remains focused on Republicans.

Stripe, a processor of small donations that had helped Trump raise tens of millions for his postelection bid to overturn the results, has stopped offering its service to the Trump campaign, according to the Wall Street Journal.

JPMorgan Chase and Citigroup also said they would temporarily stop all political contributions.

Kansas City-based Hallmark went one step further and said Monday that it is asking Sens. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., and Roger Marshall, R-Kansas, to return its donations of \$7,000 and \$5,000, respectively.

For now at least, last week's actions seem to have given rise to a new campaign donation metric.

"We continually re-evaluate our political giving and are still considering the impact of the violence at the Capitol on our future donations," Xcel Energy spokeswoman Julie Borgen said. "We will assess our future contributions to members and the impact of the events of last week on a case-by-case basis."

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