

Coke, UPS, others freeze political donations after U.S. Capitol attack

[Matt Kempner](#)

Five of the 10 biggest publicly traded companies in Georgia say they have suspended political campaign giving in the wake of last week's U.S. Capitol attacks.

Coca-Cola, UPS, Aflac, PulteGroup and WestRock are pausing contributions after making donations in 2020 to Republican candidates who recently supported unsubstantiated claims about widespread voter fraud and tried to stymie results that showed President Donald Trump lost his bid for a second term.

At least two dozen other major corporations nationally have temporarily halted political giving or decided to suspend making donations to elected officials who attempted to block the certification of Electoral College votes. Companies often make contributions through a PAC, or political action committee.

Pausing all political giving, including to both Republicans and Democrats regardless of whether they fueled the post-election turmoil, is an easy move for corporations, said Bruce Freed, the president of the Center for Political Accountability, which tracks political spending. Candidates generally aren't out asking for money so early in what is a brand new elections cycle.

"It's an initial step. But the question is what do they do next year," and later this year, Freed said. "It is a work in progress."

Coke, in a written statement this week, said it was "stunned by the unlawful

and violent events" of Jan. 6, when Trump supporters overwhelmed police at the U.S. Capitol. "The current events will long be remembered and will factor into our future contribution decisions."

A UPS spokeswoman wrote that the delivery giant "suspended all PAC contributions for now." She declined further comment.

Insurer Aflac said it has "paused all political donations to reassess our approach and ensure that our contributions remain consistent with our core values."

PulteGroup, one of the nation's largest homebuilders, said it has suspended "all contributions for at least the next six months" to ensure "that, at a minimum, the candidates the PAC supports share its views on the fundamental principles of governing and the rule of law."

Packaging heavyweight WestRock said it has suspended political contributions and will "assess multiple factors" after resuming them.

Two of the 10 largest Georgia public corporations by revenue on the Fortune 500 list — Genuine Parts and Newell Brands — said they already hadn't been giving company funds to political campaigns.

Among the other three companies, Southern Company said it will discontinue donations to officials based on certain actions, while Home Depot and Delta Air Lines didn't detail any potential changes.

In a few cases, Georgia companies continued giving to candidates after they had publicly spread unsubstantiated accusations about significant fraud. Two days after U.S. Rep. Jody Hice tweeted in November about alleged evidence of "corruption and fraud" and insisted that Trump "could have won in a landslide," his campaign recorded a \$2,500 donation from the Coca-

Cola Company Nonpartisan Committee for Good Government.

But most of the giving by companies came prior to the Nov. 3 general election. Recipients included half a dozen Republican U.S. Representatives from Georgia who attempted last week to stop Electoral College votes being cast for President-elect Joe Biden: Hice, Rick Allen, Marjorie Taylor Greene, Buddy Carter, Andrew Clyde, and Barry Loudermilk.

Last Wednesday, Trump urged thousands of supporters to march on the U.S. Capitol to resist the certification of the Electoral College votes in Biden's favor. Five people, including a Capitol Police officer, died and many more were injured in the assault on the U.S. government. Congress confirmed Biden's Electoral College victory early Thursday morning.

Southern Company, the parent of Georgia Power and Atlanta Gas Light, issued a statement decrying the violence at the U.S. Capitol and said it will discontinue support for officials who don't act "in a manner consistent" with "honesty, respect, fairness, integrity and the value of diversity."

Delta Air Lines' previous contributions from its PAC don't mean those same candidates will get future ones, a company spokeswoman said in a written statement. "Our PAC has robust processes for reviewing candidates before every contribution to ensure they align with both Delta's position on priority aviation and business issues, and importantly, our values."

A spokeswoman for Home Depot said the retailer's PAC supports candidates "who champion pro-business, pro-retail positions that create jobs and economic growth." While the PAC hasn't made any decisions on the next elections cycle, it "will evaluate future donations against a number of factors."

Leaders at Cox Enterprises, considered the largest privately held company in

the state and the owner of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, said in an internal memo that the Cox PAC is “revisiting our contribution policies and will take into consideration efforts to disregard the votes of our customers and employees.” It said “in light of these recent events we will be scrutinizing more vigilantly whom we support going forward.”

— *Staff writer Kelly Yamanouchi contributed to this article*

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