

The Philadelphia Inquirer

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OPINION

Letters to the Editor

Don't Increase Burdens On Retailers

The editorial "Give retailers same treatment" (Feb. 26) makes the mistake of equating Amazon with all Internet sellers. Existing law already requires online retailers with Pennsylvania operations to collect the state's sales taxes - just as brick-and-mortar stores do. The only retailers that don't have to collect sales tax are those that have no facilities in the state and consume none of the state's resources. Amazon, with big distribution centers spread across the country, is busy cutting deals that defer or avoid taxes they are already obligated to pay.

Proposals that impose tax-collection burdens on retailers with no in-state facilities will harm all those small businesses that have gone online to reach customers around the country. Pennsylvania's own small retailers will be the real losers if other states are allowed to export their tax duties in retaliation. In another era we called this kind of threat "mutually assured destruction." Let's hope this deterrent works as well when it comes to taxes, too.

--Steve DelBianco, McLean, Va.

Philadelphia Inquirer Editorial: Give retailers same treatment

February 26, 2012

http://articles.philly.com/2012-02-26/news/31101419_1_sales-tax-online-retailers-amazon-com

Tired of being outsold by online retailers, earthbound merchants have convinced legislatures in five states to force Web-based sellers to collect and remit sales taxes. Twenty others are working on similar laws. Now, it's time for New Jersey to join the trend and stop forgoing hundreds of millions of dollars in Web-derived tax revenue that it can use to meet its budget while protecting local businesses. Online retailers have an unfair advantage over florists, appliance stores, clothiers, music and gift shops, and other local businesses. Internet merchants can offer customers a virtual discount by not collecting sales tax.