



## Cash Is King: San Francisco To Ban Credit-Only Stores

Reality meets globalization in San Francisco, one of the most liberal cities on earth. Retail trade is being hurt by cashless stores, so a new city ordinance will mandate that cash return or stores will lose their business license. □ TN Editor

San Francisco is about to require brick-and-mortar retailers to take cash as payment, joining Philadelphia and New Jersey in banning a growing paperless practice that [critics say discriminates against low-income people](#) who may not have access to credit cards.

The Board of Supervisors will take up the issue at a meeting Tuesday, and it's likely to pass, with nearly all 11 members listed as sponsors or co-sponsors.

"I just felt it wasn't fair that if someone wanted to buy a sandwich in a store, and they had cash, that they would be turned away," said Supervisor Vallie Brown, who introduced the legislation. "We also have our homeless population. They're not banked."

In many ways, the legislation is an easy call for San Francisco officials, who strive to make life more equitable in a city with an enormous wealth gap.

High-paid tech workers who flocked to San Francisco to work for Facebook, Google, Uber and Airbnb may like the ease of paying by credit card, debit card or smartphone. But many low-income people, including more than 4,000 who sleep on San Francisco's streets every night, likely don't have money to sustain bank accounts.

According to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, 17 percent of African American households and 15 percent of Latino households had no bank account.

Some people also prefer to use cash because they don't want to leave a digital trail of where they have been and what they have bought.

San Francisco's legislation requires brick-and-mortar businesses to accept cash for goods and some services. Temporary pop-up stores and internet-only businesses such as ride-hailing companies would be exempt, as would food trucks, which say they lack the resources to handle cash.

Philadelphia and New Jersey passed similar laws this year. Legislation requiring merchants to accept cash also has been introduced in New York City.

The efforts come after the rollout last year of cashless Amazon Go stores, which [require customers to scan an app to enter](#) . Whatever items customers take are automatically tallied in a virtual cart and charged to a credit card. The retail giant bowed to pressure last month and agreed to accept cash at more than 30 cashless stores.

Amazon [opened its first cash-accepting store](#) Tuesday in a high-end New York City shopping mall frequented by office workers. Anyone who wants to pay with cash will be swiped through the turnstile entrance by employees. After shoppers grab what they want, an employee will scan the items with a mobile device, take the cash and give customers their change.

Amazon didn't say when its 11 other Go stores will start accepting cash.

Though plenty of cheap dim sum spots, taquerias and dive bars take only cash in San Francisco, some retailers argue that not taking cash is safer and more efficient.

Cashless restaurants are clustered in San Francisco's Financial District and South of Market neighborhoods, where white-collar employees devour upscale salads and protein bowls.

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