

SACRIFICIAL WORKERS



Big Household Retail Corporations Saw Profits Skyrocket by \$14.6 Billion During the Pandemic – Yet Most Ended Extra Pay for Employees

Four Companies Ending Extra Pay Spent Nearly \$3 Billion on Stock Buybacks

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The COVID-19 pandemic is raging out of control, and the profits of the biggest U.S. corporations providing essential household goods – companies such as Amazon, Walmart and Kroger – are booming. That's good news for executives and shareholders, but most essential workers staffing the front lines of these businesses are no longer receiving extra pay despite their ongoing – in fact, *rising* – risk of infection.

Starting in March and April, these companies offered workers additional compensation. Sometimes called “hazard pay” or “thank you bonuses,” some added as much as \$2 to employees’ hourly wage while others offered occasional lump sum bonuses.

Public Citizen analyzed the top 15 U.S.-based household retail corporations’ most recent quarterly earnings reports and their pandemic pay policies. The analysis revealed that, despite a combined \$14.6 billion increase in profits in the companies’ profits in fiscal year 2020 compared to the same time frame in fiscal year 2019, nine halted additional pay for workers.

Descriptions of pandemic pay policies are based on the companies’ press releases and news reports. Public Citizen reached out to each company to confirm the accuracy of the descriptions of the company pay policies included in the appendix.¹ (This report does not weigh one form of pay over another – only whether the additional pay continues or has ceased.)

¹ Six of the 15 companies responded: Albertsons, BJ's Wholesale Club, Home Depot, Kroger, Publix and Target.

Additionally, six of the companies bought back a combined \$3.7 billion in stock and seven of the companies announced plans in the late summer and fall to buy back \$17.8 billion in their own stock. Of the 12 companies spending billions or hundreds of millions on stock buybacks, only three – Costco, Home Depot and Lowe’s – continuously offer workers additional pay.

Key Findings:

- The 15 top U.S.-based household retail corporations collectively made \$60.8 billion in profits so far in fiscal year 2020 – an increase of \$14.6 billion over 2019’s profits over the same time frame. Nine have completely stopped providing any additional pay to frontline workers, despite the worsening pandemic. The nine that stopped providing additional pay together made \$10.5 billion more in profits in fiscal year 2020 than in 2019.
- Twelve of the companies are spending big on stock buybacks. Six reported a combined \$3.7 billion in stock buybacks in the latest quarter while seven announced plans in the late summer and fall to spend a combined \$17.8 billion on buybacks. Of the 12 companies spending billions or hundreds of millions on stock buybacks, only three – **Costco, Home Depot and Lowe’s** – continuously offer workers additional pay.
- Four companies that stopped offering employees extra pay – **Albertsons, BJ’s Wholesale Club, Dollar General and Walmart** – together spent nearly \$3 billion on stock buybacks, according to their latest quarterly earnings reports.
- **Amazon** has tripled its profits to \$6.3 billion in its third quarter, up from \$2.1 billion in the same quarter of 2019. So far in 2020, Amazon has reported \$14.1 billion in profits – \$2.8 billion more than last year. The company concluded its \$2-an-hour increase in worker pay at the end of May and awarded workers a “special one-time Thank You bonus” \$500 million – about 8% of the third quarter profits – at the end of June.
- Despite the \$15.6 billion in profits **Walmart** reported making so far in fiscal year 2020 – an increase of \$4.9 billion, or 45%, over 2019 – the retailer hasn’t provided frontline hourly workers additional pay since July. The retailer paid full-time frontline hourly workers a bonus of \$300 and part-time workers a bonus of \$150 three times since March. The \$1.1 billion Walmart paid in bonuses is 7% of its fiscal year 2020 profits.

- Grocery chains **Albertsons** and **Kroger's** latest quarterly earnings both show profits that more than doubled compared to the previous year – and both stopped providing extra pay to employees months ago. Albertsons spent \$1.8 billion on stock buybacks in the previous quarter and Kroger announced in September its intention to spend \$1 billion on stock buybacks.
- Just four of the companies – **Costco**, **Lowe's**, **Home Depot** and **Publix** – persist in providing employees with ongoing extra pay. **Target** has paid bonuses to hourly frontline workers twice and has separately paid two bonuses to managers and salaried employees, but has not provided extra pay continually, as the four above have.

There are more than 4.6 million retail sales workers in the U.S., and the mean wage they earn is \$12.23 an hour, according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).

A recent peer-reviewed study finds that the infection rate among grocery workers in one store reached an alarming [20%](#). In October, Amazon said there had been nearly [20,000 cases](#) among its workforce. At least [238 members](#) of the United Food and Commercial Workers – the largest union representing grocery workers – have died from illness caused by the coronavirus.

Across the top U.S.-based household retail corporations, profits surged in the most recent quarter. Collectively, these companies earned more than \$10.1 billion more in profits in the latest quarter of 2020 compared to 2019. Comparing the latest quarter of 2020 with the same quarter of 2019, their average increase in profits was 121%, with six more than doubling their earnings.

Table 1: Top 15 U.S.-based household retail corporations, ranked by \$ increase in profits in the latest quarter between 2019 and 2020.*

Corporation	Net profits, latest quarter 2020	Net profits, comparable quarter 2019	Difference between 2020 and 2019	% Increase
Amazon	\$6,331,000,000	\$2,134,000,000	\$4,197,000,000	197%
Walmart	\$5,135,000,000	\$3,288,000,000	\$1,847,000,000	56%
Lowe's*	\$1,752,000,000	\$1,049,000,000	\$703,000,000	67%
Home Depot	\$3,432,000,000	\$2,769,000,000	\$663,000,000	24%
Kroger	\$819,000,000	\$297,000,000	\$522,000,000	176%

Corporation	Net profits, latest quarter 2020	Net profits, comparable quarter 2019	Difference between 2020 and 2019	% Increase
Albertsons*	\$266,200,000	-\$168,800,000	\$435,000,000	258%
Dollar General	\$787,601,000	\$426,555,000	\$361,046,000	85%
Target	\$1,014,000,000	\$714,000,000	\$300,000,000	42%
Costco	\$1,389,000,000	\$1,097,000,000	\$292,000,000	27%
Publix	\$836,200,000	\$580,300,000	\$255,900,000	44%
Best Buy	\$432,000,000	\$238,000,000	\$194,000,000	82%
Dollar Tree	\$261,500,000	\$180,300,000	\$81,200,000	45%
Big Lots*	\$110,072,000	\$20,637,000	\$89,435,000	433%
Ace Hardware	\$138,900,000	\$53,800,000	\$85,100,000	158%
BJ's Wholesale Club	\$122,796,000	\$55,092,000	\$67,704,000	123%
TOTAL	\$22,827,269,000	\$12,733,884,000	\$10,093,385,000	79%
AVERAGE	\$1,521,817,933	\$848,925,600	\$672,892,333	121%

*See appendix for links to sources. Albertsons and Big Lots profits exclude large, one-time sale-leaseback transactions, and Lowe's excludes a loss on extinguishment of debt in latest quarter. See appendix for calculation.

An analysis of the companies' net profits earned through the latest quarter of 2020 reveals even more pronounced increases in profits. Collectively, these companies earned more than \$14.6 billion more in profits in fiscal year 2020 through the latest quarter compared to the same period of fiscal year 2019. Collectively, the companies' profits increased by 32% over last year's profits.

Table 2: Top 15 U.S.-based household retail corporations, ranked by \$ profits earned in the fiscal year up to the latest quarter of 2020.*

Corporation	Net profits so far in fiscal year 2020	Net profits to same date in fiscal year 2019	Difference between 2020 and 2019	% Increase
Walmart	\$15,601,000,000	\$10,740,000,000	4,861,000,000	45%
Amazon	\$14,109,000,000	\$11,347,000,000	\$2,762,000,000	24%
Home Depot	\$10,009,000,000	\$8,761,000,000	\$1,248,000,000	14%
Lowe's	\$4,857,000,000	\$3,771,000,000	\$1,086,000,000	29%
Costco	\$4,002,000,000	\$3,659,000,000	\$343,000,000	9%
Target	\$2,988,000,000	\$2,447,000,000	\$541,000,000	22%
Publix	\$2,770,700,000	\$1,959,000,000	\$811,700,000	41%

Corporation	Net profits so far in fiscal year 2020	Net profits to same date in fiscal year 2019	Difference between 2020 and 2019	% Increase
Kroger	\$2,031,000,000	\$1,069,000,000	\$962,000,000	90%
Dollar General	\$1,438,047,000	\$811,568,000	\$626,479,000	77%
Albertsons	\$870,700,000	\$343,800,000	\$526,900,000	153%
Best Buy	\$591,000,000	\$503,000,000	\$88,000,000	17%
Dollar Tree	\$509,100,000	\$488,200,000	\$20,900,000	4%
Big Lots	\$501,295,000	\$21,718,000	\$479,577,000	2208%
BJ's Wholesale Club	\$325,148,000	\$145,413,000	\$179,735,000	124%
Ace Hardware	\$175,100,000	\$76,400,000	\$98,700,000	129%
TOTAL	\$ 60,778,090,000	\$46,143,099,000	\$14,634,991,000	32%
<i>AVERAGE</i>	<i>\$4,051,872,667</i>	<i>\$3,076,206,600</i>	<i>\$975,666,067</i>	<i>199%</i>

*See appendix for links to sources.

All of the household retail corporations offered workers some form of additional pay, which is occasionally called hazard pay, hero pay or appreciation pay. Nine companies, however, halted the additional pay. Ace Hardware, which is structured as a cooperative, delegates the decision to offer pay increases to its individual local co-op members – some of whom reportedly provided \$1- or \$2-an-hour wage increases for employees, and some of whom did not.

Among the household retail companies that provided additional pay to their employees, Dollar General's single payment to employees in April made it the earliest company to end the additional pay. Kroger is next, having provided their last additional payments to employees in May. Albertsons, Amazon and Dollar Tree held out until June to make their final additional payments to employees. Big Lots and Walmart made their last additional payments in July. Best Buy ended its extra pandemic pay for employees in August. BJ's Wholesale Club ended its \$2 hourly wage increase in July and paid employees an additional bonus in September. Lowe's and Target pay periodic bonuses and may pay more. Target's last bonus was awarded in October and Lowe's' last bonus was awarded in November.

Only Costco, Home Depot, Lowe's and Publix have continued additional payments to workers for the duration of the pandemic. Costco offers that additional pay by adding \$2 to workers' hourly wage. Home Depot provides bonuses of \$100 per week for full-time hourly employees and \$50 per week for part-time hourly employees. Lowe's started paying front line hourly workers an additional \$2 an hour in April, then switched to

awarding periodic bonuses of \$300 for full-time workers and \$150 for part-time workers, which it has distributed seven times. According to a spokesperson, Publix has implemented unspecified permanent pay raises across its workforce.

Table 3: Pandemic pay policies of 15 top U.S.-based household retail corporations, nine of which no longer provide employees additional pay.*

Corporation	Workers still receive additional pay	Last additional payment provided	Pandemic pay policy
Ace Hardware	Varies	Varies	Decision whether to offer pay increases or sick leave benefits for employees rests with individual local co-op members (i.e. local franchise owners).
Albertsons	No	June	Ended its \$2-an-hour increase in worker pay on June 13. Provided employees who worked between March 15 and June 13 a “reward” that is “equivalent to \$4 per hour for the average hours worked” during this time.
Amazon	No	June	Ended its \$2-an-hour increase in worker pay at the end of May. Announced a “special one-time Thank You bonus” for employees at the end of June.
Best Buy	No	August	Paid unspecified “incremental appreciation pay” between March 22 and August 1, raised starting wage to \$15 an hour.
Big Lots	No	July	Started paying hourly employees an additional \$2 an hour in March and ended the additional pay in early July.
BJ’s Wholesale Club	No	September	Paid front-line hourly workers an additional \$2 an hour starting on March 23 and extended this increase through July 4. Awarded a one-time bonus of \$125-\$225 to hourly employees who worked between July 3 and Aug. 29. Additionally, BJ’s awarded bonuses ranging between \$500 and \$3,000 to “managers and key personnel” in March and May.
Costco	Yes	Ongoing	Started paying hourly workers an additional \$2 an hour in March.
Dollar General	No	April	Paid \$60 million in “employee appreciation bonuses.” Unknown how much paid per employee. With over 157,000 employees, amount estimated to be approximately \$382 per employee.
Dollar Tree	No	June	Paid employees an additional \$2 an hour between March 8 and June 27. Website says company is “investing \$200 million in our hourly-paid store and distribution center Associates with wage premiums in recognition of, and appreciation for, their dedication and efforts to serving our customers.” With over 193,000 employees, benefit amount estimated to be approximately \$1,036 per employee.

Corporation	Workers still receive additional pay	Last additional payment provided	Pandemic pay policy
Home Depot	Yes	Ongoing	Provides bonuses of \$100-per-week for full-time hourly employees and \$50-per-week for part-time hourly employees.
Kroger	No	May	Provided employees with a one-time bonus on March 21 and a "Hero Bonus" of an additional \$2 an hour from March 29 through May 16.
Lowe's	Yes	November	Paid front line hourly workers an additional \$2 an hour in April, then switched after April to awarding periodic bonuses of \$300 for full-time workers and \$150 for part-time workers. Lowe's has paid these bonuses seven times, most recently on Nov. 13.
Publix	Yes	Ongoing	According to a Publix spokesperson, Publix announced permanent pay increases because of the pandemic.
Target	Occasionally	October	Accelerated planned 2020 increase of starting wage to \$15 an hour and has awarded \$200 bonuses to store and distribution workers twice (once in June and again in October).
Walmart	No	July	Paid full-time frontline hourly workers a bonus of \$300 and part-time workers a bonus of \$150 three times since March, most recently in July.

*See appendix for expanded policy descriptions and links to sources.

The uncertainty created by the pandemic initially caused many companies to [pause plans](#) to buy back their own stocks. Corporations buy back their own stock in order to reduce the number of shares available. Reducing the number of available shares raises the value of the stock – and the value of executives' stock-based compensation – without the corporations having to improve or invest in their core business. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act aid package that Congress passed and President Donald Trump signed in the spring prohibited big corporations that receive government support in the form of loan guarantees from spending on share repurchases. But by the end of the summer, businesses that benefited from, or at least were not devastated by, the pandemic [resumed](#) stock buybacks, which totaled \$86 billion that quarter. Some companies never stopped buybacks.

Table 4: Stock buyback plans for top U.S.-based household retail corporations.*

Corporation	Buyback amount authorized	Authorization date	Latest quarter 2020 stock buybacks	Last additional payment to employees
Walmart	\$20,000,000,000	October 2017	\$500,000,000	July
Home Depot	\$15,000,000,000	February 2019	\$0	Ongoing
Lowe's	\$8,700,000,000	September 2020	\$621,000,000	November
Amazon	\$5,000,000,000	February 2016	\$0	June
Target	\$4,500,000,000	September 2020	\$0	October
Costco	\$4,000,000,000	April 2019	\$85,000,000	Ongoing
Best Buy	\$3,000,000,000	February 2019	\$0	August
Dollar General	\$2,000,000,000	August 2020	\$664,600,000	April
Kroger	\$1,000,000,000	September 2020	\$0	May
Dollar Tree	\$800,000,000	September 2020	\$0	June
Big Lots	\$500,000,000	August 2020	\$0	July
Albertsons	\$300,000,000	October 2020	\$1,762,055,640	June
BJ's Wholesale Club	\$250,000,000	November 2019	\$50,000,000	September
TOTAL	\$65,050,000,000	--	\$3,682,655,640	--

*See appendix for links to sources.

Thirteen of the 15 top U.S.-based household retail corporations have announced plans in recent years to collectively spend over \$65 billion buying back their own stock. In August, September and October of this year, seven of these companies announced new buyback plans or the resumption of previously authorized plans the companies had paused during the pandemic. Among these seven companies, which collectively plan to spend \$17.8 billion on stock buybacks, only Lowe's is offering its employees additional pay.

Six of the companies reported a combined \$3.7 billion in stock buybacks in the latest quarter. Albertsons spent \$1.76 billion on buybacks; Dollar General spent \$665 million; Lowe's spent \$621 million; Walmart spent \$500 million; Costco spent \$85 million; and BJ's Wholesale Club spent \$50 million. Among these companies, only Costco and Lowe's are continuing to provide additional pay to their employees. The companies that stopped offering employees extra pay – Albertsons, BJ's Wholesale Club, Dollar General and Walmart – together spent nearly \$3 billion on stock buybacks.

If “we’re all in this together,” as so many have said during the coronavirus pandemic, why are so many businesses holding out on workers? Why are they prioritizing making executives and shareholders richer over providing a living wage for the workers who risk their health and the health of their loved ones in order to carry out the business’ work?

In reality, the pandemic is worsening the systemic inequities – especially economic, racial, and gender inequities – that have long plagued this country. The shameful fact of most of these “essential” household retail corporation’s collective cessation of additional pay for workers, even as they plan or actively engage in stock buybacks, shows that it is the corporations who are “together.” And if they are together “with” anyone besides one another, it is Wall Street they are with more so than their workers.

APPENDIX: PROFITS, POLICIES AND SOURCES

Note: Public Citizen analyzed the top 15 U.S.-based household retail corporations' most recent quarterly earnings reports and the companies' pandemic pay policies. Descriptions of pandemic pay policies are based on the companies' press releases and news reports. Public Citizen reached out to each company to confirm the accuracy of its descriptions. Six of the 15 companies responded to Public Citizen's inquiries: Albertsons, BJ's Wholesale Club, Home Depot, Kroger, Publix and Target.

ACE HARDWARE

Quarterly profits 2020: \$138,900,000

Quarterly profits 2019: \$53,800,000

Difference: \$85,100,000

Increase: 158.18%

Source: [Earnings report](#) for quarter ending 6/27/2020

The decision whether to offer employees pay increases or sick leave benefits is delegated to Ace Hardware's individual local co-op owners. The Ace Hardware parent corporation has issued no press statements about additional benefits it is providing employees during the pandemic.

Reporting by [Hardlines Digest](#), an industry publication, about discussions among local retailers on private forums show some Ace Hardware owners offering additional pay of \$2 an hour while others buy lunches for their employees and offer them in-store credit. Most owners say they stopped offering additional pay in April or May, though [one Michigan owner](#) said he would continue paying bonuses "until things are back to normal."

ALBERTSONS

Quarterly profits 2020: \$266,200,000*

Quarterly profits 2019: -\$168,800,000*

Difference: \$435,000,000

Increase: 257.70%

Source: [Earnings report](#) for quarter ending 9/12/2020.

*Excludes \$463.6 million gains from sale/leaseback agreement, which brings total quarterly profits in 2019 up to \$294,800,000. Excludes \$18.3 million in gains on property dispositions from quarterly profits in 2020 up to \$284,500,000. The purpose of these exclusions is to remove the distorting effect of large, one-time asset sales on the analysis.

According to [news reports](#), Albertsons ended its \$2-an-hour increase in worker pay on June 13. Subsequently, Albertsons provided employees who worked between March 15 and June 13 a “reward [...] equivalent to \$4 per hour for the average hours worked” during this time.

Additionally, Albertsons’ [website](#) says employees who test positive for COVID-19 or must quarantine are eligible for up to 14 days of paid sick leave.

In Albertsons’ second quarterly earnings report, the company reports that it spent \$1.68 billion on stock buybacks in June and \$82,055,640 on stock buybacks in September. The company also authorized an additional \$300 million in stock buybacks in October.

AMAZON

Quarterly profits 2020: \$6,331,000,000

Quarterly profits 2019: \$2,134,000,000

Difference: \$4,197,000,000

Increase: 196.67%

Source: [Earnings report](#) for quarter ending 9/30/2020.

According to [news reports](#), Amazon ended its \$2-an-hour increase in worker pay at the end of May. Subsequently, Amazon [announced](#) a “special one-time Thank You bonus” for employees at the end of June.

Amazon [announced](#) that warehouse employees who test positive for COVID-19 receive 14 days of paid sick leave, as do employees who were in contact with co-workers who test positive and those who are “presumptively positive” but cannot receive a test.

In February 2016, Amazon’s board approved a program to buy back as much as [\\$5 billion](#) in stock, but the company did not buy back any stock in 2020.

BEST BUY

Quarterly profits 2020: \$432,000,000

Quarterly profits 2019: \$238,000,000

Difference: \$194,000,000

Increase: 81.51%

Source: [Earnings report](#) for quarter ending 8/1/2020.

According to this [press release](#), Best Buy increased the starting wage for hourly workers to \$15 an hour and distributed an unspecified “incremental hourly appreciation pay” to employees between March 22 and Aug. 1.

Also, according to [news reports](#), Best Buy employees were paid during the two weeks between March 22 and April 4. Best Buy also [announced](#) that employees will be paid if they must stay home because they are sick or need to care for their children.

Best Buy announced plans to buy as much as \$3 billion of its own stock in February 2019, but paused buybacks in the latest quarter because of the pandemic.

BIG LOTS

Quarterly profits 2020: \$110,072,000*

Quarterly profits 2019: \$20,637,000*

Difference: \$89,435,000

Increase: 433.37%

Source: [Earnings report](#) for quarter ending 8/1/2020.

*Excludes \$341.9 million sale/leaseback agreement, which brings total quarterly profits in 2020 up to \$451,972,000, and transformational restructuring costs in 2019, which reduce net profit in the comparable quarter to \$6,178,000. The purpose of these exclusions is to remove the distorting effect of large, one-time asset sales on the analysis.

Big Lots started paying hourly employees an additional \$2 an hour [in March](#) and ended the additional pay in [early July](#).

In August, Big Lots’ board of directors [authorized](#) \$500 million in stock buybacks.

BJ's Wholesale Club

Quarterly profits 2020: \$122,796,000

Quarterly profits 2019: \$55,092,000

Difference: \$67,704,000

Increase: 123%

Source: [Earnings report](#) for quarter ending 10/31/2020.

According to press releases, BJ's Wholesale Club paid front-line hourly workers an additional \$2 an hour starting on [March 23](#) and extended this increase through July 4, according to a company spokesperson. BJ's also raised the hourly wage for employees at its headquarters by \$2 an hour between March 23 and June 13, according to a company spokesperson. Additionally, BJ's awarded bonuses ranging between \$500 and \$3,000 to managers and key personnel in March and May. In September, BJ's paid a one-time bonus of \$125-\$225 to all hourly club and distribution center employees who worked between July 3 and August 29.

Additionally, the March 23 press release says employees are eligible for up to 14 days of paid sick leave when under mandated quarantine and that employees who test positive for the coronavirus will be paid "through a mix of accrued sick time and company paid time." According to a company spokesperson, up to 14 days of additional time is available to employees who test positive for the virus.

In November 2019, BJ's was authorized to buy back [\\$250 million](#) in its own stock. Despite the pandemic, the company proceeded with its stock buyback plan in 2020, repurchasing \$88.1 million in its own stock, [\\$50 million](#) in the latest quarter.

COSTCO

Quarterly profits 2020: \$1,389,000,000

Quarterly profits 2019: \$1,097,000,000

Difference: \$292,000,000

Increase: 26.62%

Source: [Earnings report](#) for quarter ending 8/1/2020.

According to [news reports](#), Costco started paying hourly workers an additional \$2 an hour starting on March and continues to do so.

[News reports](#) say Costco started offering up to two additional weeks of paid sick leave to employees who test positive for COVID-19 and to employees over 65.

In April 2019, Costco announced plans to buy \$4 billion in its own stock, and in the last quarter bought back \$85 million in its stock. (Stock buyback amount calculated as the difference between total fiscal year 2020 stock buybacks, \$196 million, and the buyback amount reported in the [third quarter](#), \$111 million).

DOLLAR GENERAL

Quarterly profits 2020: \$787,601,000

Quarterly profits 2019: \$426,555,000

Difference: \$361,046,000

Increase: 84.64%

Source: [Earnings report](#) for quarter ending 7/31/2020.

According to a [press release](#) posted to its website on April 30, Dollar General paid \$60 million in “employee appreciation bonuses.” There is no mention of how much Dollar General paid per employee. However Dollar With over [157,000 employees](#), amount estimated to be approximately \$382 per employee.

Also according to its [website](#), employees who stay home because of COVID-19, “including those who must remain at home due to their own diagnosis, to care for an immediate family or household member or while awaiting test results based on their own health symptoms, are paid for regularly-scheduled hours during those times.”

Dollar General [repurchased](#) \$664.6 million in its stock in the last quarter and authorized an additional \$2 billion in future stock buybacks.

DOLLAR TREE

Quarterly profits 2020: \$261,500,000

Quarterly profits 2019: \$180,300,000

Difference: \$81,200,000

Increase: 45%

Source: [Earnings report](#) for quarter ending 8/1/2020.

According to [news reports](#), Dollar Tree paid employees an additional \$2 an hour between March 8 and June 27. An undated Dollar Tree [website](#) says the company is “investing \$200 million in our hourly-paid store and distribution center Associates with wage premiums in recognition of, and appreciation for, their dedication and efforts to serving our customers.” With over 193,000 employees, , according to its [annual report](#), the benefit amount is estimated to be approximately \$1,036 per employee.

Also, according to [news reports](#), Dollar Tree employees who test positive for COVID-19 receive up to two weeks of paid sick leave, but workers who do not receive a positive test are required to use the sick time they already receive while they quarantine.

In September, Dollar Tree [announced](#) its intention to resume its plan to buy back up to \$800 million in its own stock.

HOME DEPOT

Quarterly profits 2020: \$3,432,000,000

Quarterly profits 2019: \$2,769,000,000

Difference: \$663,000,000

Increase: 23.94%

Source: [Earnings report](#) for quarter ending 11/1/2020.

According to this [press release](#), Home Depot is providing bonuses of \$100-per-week for full-time hourly employees and \$50-per-week for part-time hourly employees. The company says it is transitioning toward making [permanent](#) and annualized increases in its employees’ pay.

Additionally, Home Depot provides up to 14 days of paid time off for employees who must quarantine, 80 hours of paid time off for full-time hourly employees (240 for older and higher-risk employees), 40 hours of paid time off for part-time hourly employees (120 for older and higher-risk employees) and additional unspecified “relaxed time off policies.”

In February 2019, Home Depot announced plans to spend [\\$15 billion](#) on stock buybacks.

KROGER

Quarterly profits 2020: \$819,000,000

Quarterly profits 2019: \$297,000,000

Difference: \$522,000,000

Increase: 175.76%

Source: [Earnings report](#) for quarter ending 8/15/2020.

According to its [website](#), Kroger provided employees with a one-time bonus on March 21 and a “Hero Bonus” of an additional \$2 an hour from March 29 through May 16. Additionally, Kroger provides 14 days of paid sick leave to employees whose COVID-19 diagnosis is “verified by an accredited health care professional.”

In September, Kroger [announced](#) its plan to buy back up to \$1 billion of its stock.

LOWE’S

Quarterly profits 2020: \$1,752,000,000*

Quarterly profits 2019: \$1,049,000,000*

Difference: \$703,000,000

Increase: 67.02%

Source: [Earnings report](#) for quarter ending 10/30/2020.

*Excludes \$1.060 billion loss on extinguishment of debt in latest quarter, which reduces profit to \$692 million.

According to [news reports](#), Lowe’s paid front-line hourly workers an additional \$2 an hour in April, then switched after April to awarding periodic bonuses of \$300 for full-time workers and \$150 for part-time workers. Lowe’s has paid these bonuses six times, most recently on Oct. 7.

Additionally, [the company’s website](#) says employees are eligible for up to 14 days of paid sick leave “for all associates who need it, whether that’s because they are feeling sick, caring for a loved one, or because they have been faced with new hardships such as closed schools and daycares.” The site also notes: “Extended emergency paid leave up to a total of four weeks for those at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.”

In September, Lowe’s [announced](#) its plan to spend \$8.7 billion on stock buybacks.

PUBLIX

Quarterly profits 2020: \$836,200,000

Quarterly profits 2019: \$580,300,000

Difference: \$255,900,000

Increase: 44.10%

Source: [Earnings report](#) for quarter ending 9/26/2020.

Publix was criticized in [news reports](#) for lagging behind other retailers in providing additional pay to employees. In response to Public Citizen's questions, a Publix spokesperson said that, in response to the pandemic, the company instituted permanent pay raises across its workforce but did not specify the amount.

Paid sick leave [reportedly](#) is provided only to employees who test positive for COVID-19. A Publix spokesperson told Public Citizen that employees who must quarantine because of exposure also are eligible for sick leave. Employees who lack sufficient sick leave are eligible for up to 80 hours of emergency pandemic pay, and part-time employees are eligible for up to two weeks of emergency pandemic pay based on their average hours worked.

TARGET

Quarterly profits 2020: \$1,014,000,000

Quarterly profits 2019: \$714,000,000

Difference: \$300,000,000

Increase: 42.02%

Source: [Earnings report](#) for quarter ending 10/31/2020.

Target instituted a temporary [\\$2-an-hour](#) wage increase from March to [July 4](#), and subsequently raised the starting wage for hourly workers to [\\$15 an hour](#). According to this [press release](#), Target has awarded \$200 bonuses to store and distribution workers twice (once in June and again in October). Target also paid bonuses of \$250-\$1,500 to store team leads in April and an unspecified performance bonus to store directors, executive team leaders and salaried distribution center leaders in July.

Additionally, Target reportedly provides [up to 14 days](#) of paid sick leave for employees who test positive for the virus or must quarantine and a "[one-time 30-day](#)" paid leave option for employees who are especially vulnerable.

In September, Target reauthorized [\\$4.5 billion](#) in stock buybacks, which it intends to resume in 2021.

WALMART

Quarterly profits 2020: \$5,135,000,000

Quarterly profits 2019: \$3,288,000,000

Difference: \$1,847,000,000

Increase: 56.17%

Source: [Earnings report](#) for quarter ending 10/31/2020

According to [press releases](#), Walmart paid full-time front-line hourly workers a bonus of \$300 and part-time workers a bonus of \$150 three times since March, most recently in July.

Additionally, this March 10 [memo to employees](#) says Walmart employees who are mandated to quarantine receive up to two weeks of paid sick leave and that additional pay may be provided for up to 26 weeks for confirmed cases who are unable to return to work. The policy also says some disciplinary measures for unplanned absences will be waived. These policies have been extended through January 31, 2021.

Walmart, citing authorization by its board in October 2017 to spend \$20 billion on stock buybacks, reported spending \$500 million buying back its own stock in the previous quarter.