



# SMALL BUSINESS MAJORITY 2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

Supporting small businesses throughout the COVID-19 pandemic



# Letter from the Desk of Founder and CEO John Arensmeyer



It's no secret that small businesses continued to face challenges this year amidst the ongoing pandemic. And while too many small businesses have continued to struggle, we've also seen how resilient and innovative entrepreneurs can be as they continue to adapt their businesses. Moreover, hundreds of thousands have tapped into market opportunities to launch new enterprises.

As we enter a new year, we plan to continue working with our nation's entrepreneurs to connect them with information and resources to help them adapt and grow, while also advocating for long-term national and state policies to ensure a sustainable small business-centric recovery.

In particular, we are fully committed to supporting our nation's most under-represented small businesses, including those owned by people of color and women.

We couldn't do our work without your involvement and support. Have a peaceful and enjoyable holiday season. We look forward to collaborating with you in 2022.

Until next year,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John C. Arensmeyer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# Educating small businesses throughout the crisis



This year, we continued to educate small business owners and entrepreneurs about important resources, funding options, policy updates and more that could help their businesses recover from the ongoing pandemic and become more resilient. Over the course of the year, we hosted and participated in more than **430 events**, **partnering with more than 300 organizations** and stakeholders. These events garnered more than 20,000 event registrants and indirectly reached 150,000 individuals. Of those attendees, more than two-thirds were women, 60% were people of color and 75% were

self-employed or micro business owners.

This year, we further developed our relationships with policymakers and important small business leaders. We were invited to participate in various press events and briefings, and we hosted virtual discussions with policymakers to share timely updates with entrepreneurs. This includes events with U.S. Senators Ron Wyden, Ben Cardin and Cory Booker. We also participated in the White House's June briefing on the American Jobs Plan, the White House Town Hall on Access to Markets and U.S. Senator Robert Menendez's recent press event to introduce the Small Business Lending Disclosure Act of 2021.

[One year into the pandemic](#), Small Business Majority convened business organizations, policymakers and philanthropic organizations to initiate a conversation about the road to recovery for small businesses. During this [session](#), we heard from Congressman Hakeem Jeffries (NY-8), Chairman of the House Democratic Caucus, Atlanta small business owner Renard Beaty, Los Angeles small business owner Corissa Hernandez, Start Small Think Big, ICIC and staff from the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.



*CEO John Arensmeyer speaking at Senator Menendez's press event on the Small Business Lending Disclosure Act*



In May, Small Business Majority welcomed newly appointed **Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Isabella Casillas Guzman** to a [special virtual event](#) for small business owners. During this webinar, the Administrator spoke about the steps the SBA is taking to help small businesses on their road to recovery.

Additionally, our Government Affairs team launched a monthly policy briefing series, which welcomed guest speakers such as Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senator Ben Ray Luján and gave timely updates on the state of national policies that impact small businesses.

# State highlights

**In California**, our team conducted or participated in more than 200 events in both English and Spanish. We worked closely with the state of California and Lendistry to promote the California Small Business Relief Grant Program, a multi-billion dollar initiative to provide grant money to California's small businesses. Small Business Majority was able to connect 800 business owners to the grant program through one-on-one assistance and virtual webinars.

Additionally, we coordinated with the state government to support outreach and education about the California Rebuilding Fund, a low-cost loan program designed for California's smallest business owners. We were able to reach more than 1,600 business owners through events, including [Alicia Villanueva](#) who was one of the first 1,000 small businesses in the state to receive a loan.

We also welcomed [Josaline Cuesta](#) to the team as our Senior California Program Manager/Southern California Outreach Manager this year. Josaline and her team are working with partners and business owners across the state to support a thriving small business economy.

We advocated for a number of bills during the 2021 legislative session to ensure robust investments in long-term small business needs, including access to capital, grants and technical assistance. [Read more in this op-ed](#) by California Managing Director Mark Herbert and Senior Policy & Engagement Manager Bianca Blomquist.



During National Hispanic Heritage Month, Small Business Majority partnered with Fridars, an organization founded by network member Jaqueline Vrba, which aims to empower Latina women through entrepreneurship, to host an in person event for Spanish speaking business owners in the Inland Empire.

**In Colorado**, not only did we host dozens of events, but our advocacy efforts led to some very important policy wins for small businesses, including the passing of SB21-199, which removes barriers for undocumented entrepreneurs and the Colorado Health Insurance Option, which will help lower healthcare costs in the individual and small group markets. Small Business Majority's advocacy efforts led to the small group market being kept in the bill as changes were made to the legislation.

In order to make these policy wins and others possible, we counted on expert testimony from many Small Business Majority network members including [Alejandro Flores-Muñoz](#), [Sarita Parikh](#), [Jeff Rogoff](#) and others.

This year, we also welcomed [Anna Stevens](#) to the team as our new Colorado Outreach Manager. In her short time with us, Anna has already hosted a panel discussion at Denver Start Up Week and led listening sessions throughout rural communities in the state to broaden our understanding of the needs of small businesses across Colorado.

In June, Small Business Majority network member Sarita Parikh and Colorado Director Lindsey Vigoda joined Governor Jared Polis as he signed the Colorado Health Insurance Option into law on the steps of the state capitol.

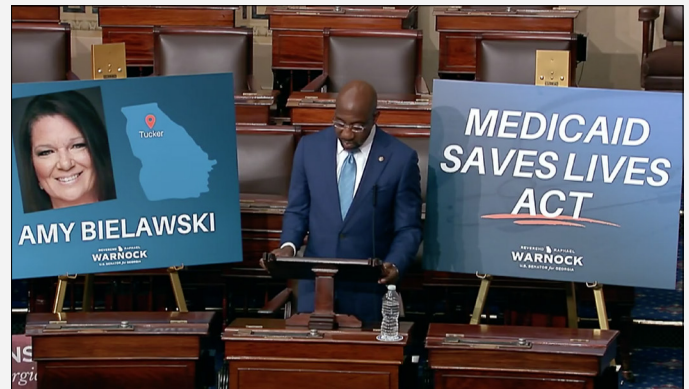


**In Georgia**, Outreach Manager Rachel Shanklin hosted more than 30 events for small business owners in the last year, including her Economic Equity: Advancing Women of Color in Business webinar, which featured special guests Veronica Pugin, Senior Policy Advisor for the SBA and Terri Denison, Georgia SBA District Director.

This year, we advocated for a Georgia earned income tax credit (EITC) through testimony and [letters of support](#) to the governor. In addition, we hosted a roundtable discussion with guest panelists Georgia State Senator Elena Parent and Georgia House Representative Marvin Lim about why implementing a state EITC would be beneficial for Georgia small businesses.

Additionally, we launched the [Georgia Small Business Council](#), a group of seven Georgian small business owners who meet regularly to discuss resources and policies that impact small businesses and who act as spokespeople for the organization.

Small business owner and Georgia Small Business Council member Amy Bielawski's story was [recognized on the floor of the U.S. Senate](#) by Senator Raphael Warnock when he was speaking about the Medicaid Saves Lives Act. Senator Warnock highlighted Amy, who is in the coverage gap and has pre-existing conditions, to share why small business owners would benefit from Medicaid expansion.



**In the Midwest**, Midwest Director Geri Aglipay worked around the clock to support the expansion of the Illinois Secure Choice program, help implement Illinois' Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) and educate policymakers on the Wisconsin Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Revenue to bring Wisconsin state tax laws for small businesses in conformity with the CARES Act.

Throughout the year, we hosted more than 50 events in the Midwest, including our continued bi-weekly webinar series with the SBA Illinois District Office to bring up to date information about government funding and resources to small business owners.

**In Virginia**, we launched our [Virginia Small Business Council](#) to help inform our advocacy and education efforts in the commonwealth. We also worked with Virginia policymakers to include \$250 million added dollars for the Rebuild VA Grant as part of the Governor's budget, advocated for the passage of VirginiaSaves, a state-run retirement savings program, and the passage of HB2332, which creates a reinsurance program in the state.



In September, Small Business Majority network members Muneer Baig and Shirley Modlin were invited to participate in Senator Mark Warner's (D-VA) Paid Leave Roundtable to discuss the need for a program in Virginia.



Southern Opportunity and Resilience Fund

Across 15 southern states, we supported the roll out of the Southern Opportunity and Resilience (SOAR) Fund over the summer to help small businesses in the South recover from the pandemic. We not only educated small business owners through 10 events—reaching 1,200 entrepreneurs—we also held a “Train the Trainer” webinar series to prepare 300 lenders and business organizations for incoming questions about applications.

## Updates from our National Women’s Entrepreneurship Director

In the last two years, care shortages have been ever more apparent as stay at home orders increased the responsibilities of caregivers, with women bearing the brunt of this burden. Women entrepreneurs were faced with a lack of support with child care as they attempted to run their businesses throughout the pandemic.

Led by our National Women's Entrepreneurship Director [Geri Aglipay](#), our team hosted more than 20 events to provide resources and assistance to women business owners, including webinars for child care providers—95% of which are women—about access to capital resources.

Additionally, we partnered with Women's Way in Philadelphia to present the small business lens on closing the gender wealth gap in a national webinar.

## Updates from our National Latino Outreach Manager

Last year, we saw Latino business owners disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, so this year, we continued to expand our outreach to Latino and Hispanic communities by instating [Latavia Pineda](#) as our new National Latino Outreach Manager. In the last year, Small Business Majority has hosted nearly 40 events in Spanish.



During National Hispanic Heritage Month, we partnered with Support Latino Business and Team Friday to award three grants to Hispanic business owners in our network. Our grant winners were Vannesa Avalos, owner of Luna y Cielo, LLC in Illinois, Alejandro Florez, owner of Combi Taco in Colorado, and Nancy Alvarez, owner of Scary Good Coffee in California.

*Grant recipient Vannesa Avalos and Midwest Director Geri Aglipay*

In our efforts to reach and engage monolingual and bilingual Latino entrepreneurs, Small Business Majority joined Telemundo throughout the year to raise awareness around [existing resources in the community](#), and to underscore the importance of supporting [Latino women entrepreneurs](#) as they faced layered impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Expanding resources for small businesses and entrepreneurs



This year, small businesses across the country continued to face pandemic-related challenges such as supply chain disruptions, changes in public health orders, financial setbacks stemming from new variants and much more.

In 2021, more than 140,000 visitors came to our online resource hub [Venturize](#) searching for tools and resources to sustain, pivot and make their business more resilient. We focused on identifying and highlighting new and ongoing state, local, and private grant and loan opportunities for businesses that desperately needed access to capital to keep their doors open.

More than 1,000 business owners sought financing through our [MatchFinder](#) portal, a tool that directs small business owners to local assistance providers that can help them become loan-ready and provide guidance on business planning, credit building and much more, and more than 3,000 entrepreneurs visited our map of national and local business assistance providers.

**Browse our resources on [Venturize.org](#)**

## Tracking COVID-19's Impact



In 2021 we continued to track the impact of the pandemic as small businesses begin to recover and come up against new challenges such as supply chain disruptions and economic setbacks stemming from new coronavirus variants. We conducted state-specific research in [California](#), [Colorado](#) and [Georgia](#). Our national polling took a pulse of where small businesses stand on timely matters such as workforce shortages, paid leave, tax reforms and vaccine mandates.

Our most [recent survey](#), released this week, shows that small businesses are overwhelmed by supply chain disruptions, with only 1 in 4 respondents reporting they

have not experienced any supply chain issues. Nearly half (46%) report this has limited their ability to acquire new inventory.

**Read our research at [smallbusinessmajority.org/research](#)**

# Policy solutions to ensure small business recovery

As Congress and the new administration worked to pass long-term recovery measures, Small Business Majority used our polling and our network to make sure small business needs were well represented in discussions about improving the Paycheck Protection program, the bipartisan infrastructure bill, Build Back Better and more.

## Administration changes to the Paycheck Protection Program

Small Business Majority called on policymakers to implement structural changes to PPP for nearly a year so that the program would work better for the smallest and hardest-hit small businesses. In February, the new administration announced several important changes during the last round of the program's funding that we had been advocating for, including helping sole proprietors receive more support and offering a priority application window for micro businesses.

## Infrastructure and broadband

We urged Congress to invest in physical infrastructure and broadband by mobilizing hundreds of small businesses to add their names to a [letter](#) calling on Congress to invest in our country's outdated infrastructure systems. Small business owners also shared their views on the importance of investing in infrastructure by authoring letters to the editor, participating in our ongoing surveys, getting the word out on social media and more.

## Transparency in small business lending

Currently the federal Truth in Lending Act (TILA) requires that consumer creditors disclose critical financing information, including annual percentage rate (APR), in a clear and comparable format. However, Congress has yet to extend these disclosure requirements to small business loans and other credit products. This fall, we circulated a [sign-on letter](#) to encourage Congress to pass newly introduced legislation that would protect small businesses and shared [stories](#) of small business owners who were left behind by federal funding programs during the pandemic and were left vulnerable to predatory practices.

## Build Back Better

Small businesses around the country are urging Congress to pass the Build Back Better plan to invest in healthcare, child care and paid family and medical leave. Doing so would help small employers better compete for a talented workforce while also supporting and encouraging entrepreneurship. Small business owners have made their voices heard by [signing a letter](#) to Congress, authoring [letters to the editor](#), and more.

In October, in partnership with Main Street Alliance, we hosted a roundtable discussion with U.S. Senator Kyrsten Sinema's staff on small business support for some of the corporate tax provisions in Build Back Better. Two Arizona small businesses joined to share why they support the package as a whole and the tax provisions specifically.

**Read all of our recommendations at [smallbusinessmajority.org/policy-agenda](https://smallbusinessmajority.org/policy-agenda)**



# Elevating the voices of small business owners

## State of Small Biz



In April, we heard from six business owners from across the country to learn how the pandemic was still impacting them one year into the COVID-19 crisis. Our [State of Small Biz](#) Instagram campaign highlighted their stories and the ups and downs that entrepreneurs are faced with while running a business through a global health crisis.

Read more on our blog [smallbusinessmajority.org/blog](https://smallbusinessmajority.org/blog)

## Small Business Majority Holiday Gift Guide



In celebration of Small Business Saturday and after last year's success, we brought back our Holiday Gift Guide, which promotes more than 300 small businesses, including more than 200 women-owned businesses and 180 businesses owned by entrepreneurs of color. The Guide includes exclusive deals, and products that support a variety of causes, and offers plenty of hand-crafted and unique items to shop from.

Shop the guide at [smallbusinessmajority.org/gift-guide-2021](https://smallbusinessmajority.org/gift-guide-2021)

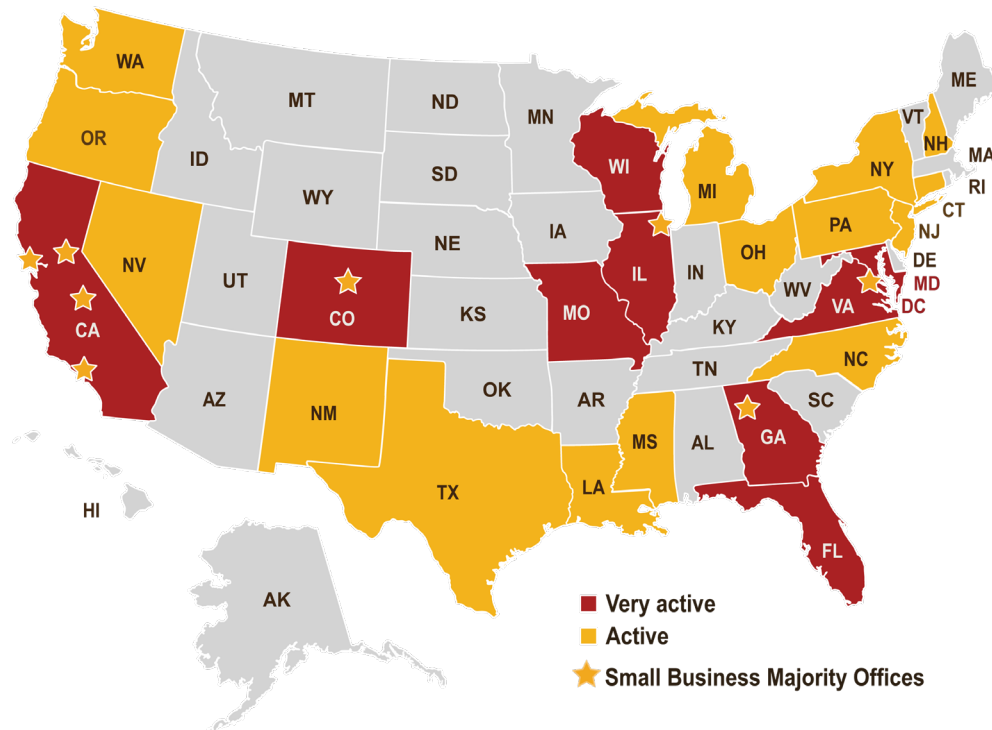
## Small businesses share their stories with the media

Small businesses issues have remained top of mind for the media this year, and our team stayed in constant communication with reporters and news anchors at the state and national level to connect them with small business owners and Small Business Majority's policy experts, resulting in hundreds of media mentions, op-eds, TV segments and more. A few notable interviews include the following:

- Small Business Council member Nancy Clark was featured in a [CNN article](#) this May talking about vaccine requirements and keeping her employees safe.
- [The New York Times](#) featured network members Brandon Lindley and Sarah Ladley in an article this July where she shared the challenges of running a small business amid workforce shortages.
- [Time Magazine](#) cited Small Business Majority's polling on the strain of making commercial rent payments on small businesses during the pandemic.

# Where we work

Small Business Majority is a national small business organization that empowers America's diverse entrepreneurs to build a thriving and equitable economy. We engage our network of more than 85,000 small businesses and 1,500 business and other partner organizations to advocate for public policy solutions and deliver resources to entrepreneurs that promote equitable small business growth. Our deep connections with the small business community along with our scientific research enable us to educate the public about key issues impacting America's entrepreneurs, with a special focus on advancing the smallest businesses and those facing systemic inequalities.



## Headquarters

**Washington, DC**  
1015 15th Street NW, Suite 450  
Washington, DC 20005  
(866) 597-7431

## State offices

**Washington, DC**  
(202) 828-8357

**Los Angeles, CA**  
(323) 990-5512

**Atlanta, GA**  
(470) 250-9494

**San Francisco, CA**  
(415) 887-9829

**Fresno, CA**  
(559) 777-2533

**Chicago, IL**  
(312) 487-1899

**Sacramento, CA**  
(279) 999-9876

**Denver, CO**  
(720) 443-4330