

# Looking Ahead: Key Federal Policy Updates for Small Businesses in 2026

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# Meet our speakers



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## Today's discussion

- Where we stand halfway through the 119th Congress
- Small Business Majority's priorities in 2026
- How small business owners can get involved



# About our federal policy work

- Small Business Majority advocates across three core federal policy pillars:
  - Expanding access to capital, resources, and opportunities for entrepreneurs
  - Bolstering a Main Street-friendly workforce and the creation of quality jobs
  - Fostering a level playing field for American small businesses
- Our work involves connecting small businesses to opportunities to speak out on policy issues and changes impacting them
- This year, we want as many small businesses involved in our work so we can ensure that public policy solutions we fight for keep your needs in mind

**If you are impacted by any of the issues discussed during today's presentation, please let us know in the chat!**

# Halfway through the 119th Congress, where do we stand?

- State of play
- Recent federal policy changes
- Immediate priorities for lawmakers in 2026
- Long-term priorities



# State of play in Congress

- Republicans retain a **slim majority** in both the House and Senate, which has made it difficult to pass legislation outside of the reconciliation process
  - The Republican majority in the House has shrunk to just two votes (218-213) after recent retirements.
- Democrats have struggled to effectively use leverage and recently failed to secure priority provisions (such as affordable healthcare)
- Heading into the midterms, approval ratings show that voters are ready for a change either in the party power balance or who represents their states

# Last year, policy changes caused small businesses to face mounting challenges

- Sweeping tariffs imposed by the administration under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) and reciprocal tariff agreements
- Abandonment of key healthcare programs like Medicaid (through H.R. 1) and a failure to extend the ACA's enhanced premium tax credits (EPTCs)
  - Medicaid and the ACA are critical to the small business community – **1 in 3 Medicaid enrollees are tied to a small business** and **nearly half of all ACA enrollees** are either small business owners, self-employed entrepreneurs or small business employees.
- Heightened immigration enforcement
  - Economic impact
  - SBA loan eligibility changes
- Disinvestment in key programs that serve small businesses
- The longest government shutdown in history (43 days)

# Looking ahead, what are the immediate priorities for Congress?

- Two urgent priorities will guide January's agenda – **healthcare** and **government funding**
- Healthcare remains unsolved
  - The ACA's EPTCs officially lapsed on December 31, meaning millions of small business owners and employees will face significantly higher premiums this year.
  - However, momentum is building on an extension deal after the House passed a clean, three-year extension on January 8 with bipartisan support.
- Government funding expires yet again on **January 30**

# Longer term priorities for lawmakers in 2026

- Lawmakers aim to move a larger healthcare package this year
  - Expand access to Association Health Plans, Health Savings Accounts, and other healthcare programs
  - Bring more transparency to the healthcare system
    - PBM transparency
    - Patients Deserve Price Tags Act
    - Site neutral billing/site of service reforms
    - Regulatory action on these items are forthcoming or being considered now
- White House releases healthcare plan directing Congress on key priorities for healthcare reform package
- Talk amongst Republicans of a second reconciliation package focused on healthcare affordability

# Take Action: Tell Congress to Pass Healthcare Price Transparency Legislation Now

- Tell Congress to pass the bipartisan **Patients Deserve Price Tags Act** to require hospitals and health plans to disclose costs and hidden fees associated with their services. Join small business owners nationwide who are calling for the urgent need to pass bipartisan, commonsense legislation that lowers healthcare costs for small businesses and their employees.



Sign our letter!

# How is Small Business Majority getting involved?

- Legislative engagement
- Regulatory and administration engagement



# Legislative engagement

- Push for legislation that exempts or provides relief for small businesses saddled with tariff burdens and high fees – best bet for action may be with the Supreme Court
- Advocate for immigration reform that negates the need for mass deportation policies
- Champion key small business programs through FY26 funding, including funding for agencies like the SBA and MBDA to reach more entrepreneurs
- Fight for transparency in small business loan products
- Ask Congress to pass reforms that help small firms compete (credit cards, price discrimination)
- Allow small businesses to weigh in on key benefit policy changes needed like retirement plans, childcare, and paid family and medical leave

# Regulatory and administration engagement

- Advocate for a reversal of limitations made to the SBA 7(a) and 504 loan programs in response to immigration crackdowns, which cause unnecessary barriers for small businesses to access capital
- Engage key financial regulators like the CFPB, Treasury and others to ensure lenders are collecting enough data on small business loans to inform policy that closes credit gaps
- Work with anti-trust enforcers to bring actions against players in the economy that purposefully take advantage of small businesses from online platforms to larger suppliers in industries like food and beverage
- Support programmatic efforts at key agencies supporting small business programs

# How YOU can get involved as a small business owner



# How can you get involved?

- Share your story and sign up for updates
- Respond to polling opportunities
- Become a spokesperson
- Join us for in-person advocacy activities like fly-ins or testimony
- Provide us with your feedback on anything we talked about today



# Interested in being a small business advocate?

Here are a few ways small business owners work with us:

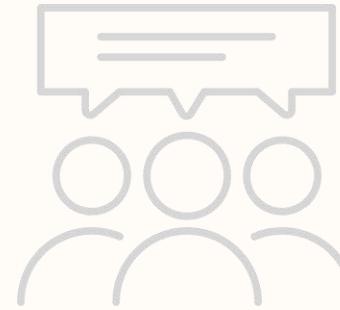
- Talk to our team about the issues you're facing
- Speak at press conferences
- Engage in media opportunities
- Participate in fly-ins, congressional testimonies, written statements for the record
- Learn how to become an advocate in your community



## Share your story

We'd love to get to know you better! Our small business owners have opportunities to be quoted by the media, participate in events with elected officials, testify in favor of small business forward legislation, and be featured on our blog and social media.





# Questions?