

White House Conference on Small Business

Problem:

The White House Conference on Small Business (WHCSB) was a series of three conferences in 1980, 1986, and 1995, respectively convened by Presidents Carter, Reagan, and Clinton to strengthen relationships with the small business community and develop productive policy solutions to economic problems. Nearly 30 years on, it is time to convene a WHCSB or related gathering to develop a cohesive small-business agenda, where our community can ensure the government is taking an active, appropriate role in helping small business recover from the pandemic and flourish for years to come.

- here are an estimated 32.5 million small businesses employing some 47.5 percent of all U.S. employees (up from 47.1 percent in 2021).
- Small-business owners continue to face countless challenges in their efforts to grow their companies, and create jobs, a significant detriment to stronger economic growth and especially exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic
- There have been three White House Conferences, occurring in 1980, 1986, and 1995. They were convened in an effort to foster better relationships between the business community, Congress, and the White House to develop innovative policy solutions to economic problems.
- Comprehensively addressing small-business issues of the day in a focused and effective setting, the 1995 WHCSB resulted in 60 legislative and regulatory recommendations, more than 90 percent of which were addressed in some way, with 20 of the 60 recommendations ultimately enacted into law.

Solution:

Three decades is far too long to go without giving voice and a forum to America's small businesses, which account for 46.8 percent of U.S. private sector employers and an estimated 1.6 million net new jobs in 2019. Convening a WHCSB sends a message to the entire small-business community that Congress and the White House see their long-term economic security as a priority.

- President Biden and Congress should work together to authorize and appropriate funds for a WHCSB, ensuring that small-business issues remain at the forefront of policy discussions and have a voice at the highest levels of the American government.
- This goal is only achievable by coordinated work of Congress through the Senate and House Small Business Committees, the administration through the SBA, and bridges with small-business advocacy groups.
- Implementing a regional, state, and national framework for the conference, as has been done for past WHCSBs, is critical to ensuring broad, diverse input and distinguishes this kind of conference from a simple roundtable of hand-picked small-business owners.