



BARACK OBAMA: SUPPORTING AMERICAN SMALL BUSINESS

"I believe small businesses are the heart of the American economy, and I am committed to expanding opportunities for small businesses."

[Speech in Washington, May 4, 2006]

BARACK OBAMA'S PLAN FOR SMALL BUSINESS

There are approximately 25.8 million businesses in the United States and 99.7 percent of all employers are small businesses. Barack Obama will help these businesses by cutting their health care costs, improving their access to capital and investing in innovation and development.

Fix our Health Care Crisis: Nearly 45 million Americans have no health coverage today. Skyrocketing health care costs are making it increasingly difficult for employers, particularly small businesses, to provide health insurance to their employees. Barack Obama's health care plan will help small businesses that want to cover their employees by letting small firms buy into a new low-cost, high-quality national health plan similar to the one offered to members of Congress. For small businesses, having a single employee with catastrophic expenditures can make insurance unaffordable to all of the workers in the firm. The Obama plan would reimburse employer health plans for a portion of the catastrophic costs they incur above a threshold if they use the savings to reduce the cost of workers' premiums. It is estimated that Obama's health plan will save businesses \$140 billion annually in insurance premiums.

Expand Loan Programs for Small Businesses: Access to capital is a top concern among small business owners. Barack Obama cosponsored the bipartisan Small Business Lending Reauthorization and Improvements Act. This bill expands the Small Business Administration's loan and micro-loan programs which provide start-up and long-term financing that small firms cannot receive through normal channels. Obama will work to help more entrepreneurs get loans, expand the network of lenders, and simplify the loan approval process.

Support Innovation and High-Tech Job Creation: Barack Obama believes we need to expand federal funding for basic research, diversify energy sources, expand the deployment of broadband technology, and make the research and development tax credit permanent so that businesses can invest in innovation and create high-paying, secure jobs.

Invest in Women-Owned Small Businesses: Women are majority owners of more than 28 percent of U.S. businesses, but lead less than 4 percent of venture capital-backed firms. Women business owners are more likely than white male business owners to have their loan applications denied. Barack Obama encourages investment in women-owned businesses, providing more support to women business owners and reducing discrimination in lending. To create greater opportunities for women business owners who would like to do business with the federal government, Obama will implement the Women Owned Business contracting program that was signed into law by President Bill Clinton, but has yet to be implemented by the Bush Administration.

Increasing Minority Access to Capital: Access to venture capital is critically important to the development of minority-owned businesses. Yet there has been a growing gap between the amounts of venture capital available to minority-owned small businesses compared to other small businesses. Less than 1 percent of the \$250 billion in venture capital dollars invested annually nationwide has been directed to the country's 4.4 million minority business owners. And in recent years, there has been a significant decline in the share of Small Business Investment Company financings that have gone to minority-owned and women-owned businesses. In order to increase their size, capacity, and ability to do business with the federal government, and to compete in the open market, minority firms need greater access to venture capital investment, as well as greater access to business loans. Barack Obama will strengthen Small Business Administration programs that provide capital to minority-owned businesses, support outreach programs that help minority business owners apply for loans, and work to encourage the growth and capacity of minority firms.

Promote Small Business Ownership in the Communications Industry: Barack Obama joined Senator John Kerry (D-MA) in calling on the Federal Communications Commission to immediately address the issues of minority, women, and small business media ownership before taking up a second review of wider media ownership rules. Obama supports efforts to achieve diverse media ownership, particularly in an era of increased media concentration.

Support Local Businesses Affected by Hurricane Katrina: In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Barack Obama introduced the Hurricane Katrina Recovery Act to rebuild the Gulf Coast. This bill included language to increase the government-wide goal for procurement contracts awarded to small businesses owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals for recovery and reconstruction activities related to Hurricane Katrina. Obama also established a government-wide goal for procurement contracts awarded to local businesses in Katrina-affected areas of 30 percent of that total value for 2006 and 2007.

Provide Emergency Relief: Barack Obama supported legislation to provide emergency relief to small businesses affected by a significant increase in the price of heating oil, natural gas, propane, or kerosene. This bill authorized the Small Business Administration to make disaster loans to assist small businesses that have suffered or are likely to suffer substantial economic injury as the result of a significant increase in the price of heating fuel.

Support Rural Small Businesses: Barack Obama cosponsored the Emergency Farm Relief Act of 2006 to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to make grants to state agriculture departments or comparable agencies in qualified states for direct economic loss payments to eligible small businesses.

Close the Digital Divide: The lack of affordable, high-speed Internet access in rural, urban, and minority communities has created a digital divide between those who have access to the Internet and those who do not. This severely limits the growth potential of many urban and rural companies. Approximately only one-third of rural areas and half of urban areas have high-speed Internet at home or work. The areas affected by Hurricane Katrina have particularly suffered due to a lack of IT infrastructure. Barack Obama believes we can get true broadband to every community in America through a combination of reform of the Universal Service Fund, better use of the nation's wireless spectrum, promotion of next-generation technologies, and new tax and loan incentives. As a key step to achieving full broadband access, Obama believes the Federal Communications Commission should provide an accurate map of broadband availability using a true definition of broadband instead of the current 200 kbs standard and an assessment of obstacles to fuller broadband penetration.