

Organizing & Executing the Next White House Conference on Small Business (WHCSB)

The White House Conference on Small Business (WHCSB) was a series of three conferences that occurred in 1980, 1986, and 1995. They were convened by presidents Jimmy Carter (originating by Executive Order [12091](#)), Ronald Reagan (originating from Congressional authorization of [P.L. 98-276](#)) and Bill Clinton (originating from Congressional authorization [P.L. 101-409](#)) in an effort to foster better relationships with members of the business community, Congress and the White House to develop innovative policy solutions to economic problems. President Carter and President Clinton presented the 1980 and 1995 Conference's keynote addresses, respectively. A November 2015 Congressional Research Service (CRS) [report](#) provided an analysis of the three Conferences to date. C-SPAN [covered](#) the concluding day of the five-day 1995 Conference.

All three Conferences shared similar organizational formats and activities performed, with differences generated in process and outcomes. To their credit, each of the three Conferences issued 60 policy recommendations for Congress and the Administration to consider. In addition, the 1995 Conference delegates elected regional implementation teams which worked closely with Small Business Administration (SBA) officials in monitoring congressional and executive branch action on the 1995 Conference's recommendations after the Conference had ended. The SBA attributed much of the 1995 Conference's implementation "success rate" to the efforts of these implementation teams. CRS noted that the 1980 Conference included participation from *over 200 small business and trade associations*.

A critical piece to the success of the WHCSB is the utilization of state conferences to ensure broad and equitable representation of the very diverse small-business community. Through the state conferences, which feed into the regional conferences and then into the national conference, small-business owners can develop, enhance and fully embrace the key issues facing small businesses nationwide. In addition to building consensus, growing small-business networks and nurturing future small-business leaders, the state conferences and broad participation of small businesses lend credibility to the final list of recommendations.

Despite action and success on a variety of issues impacting small business, there has not been a White House conference in more than two decades. That is far too long to go without giving voice and a forum to America's small businesses which account for 99 percent of U.S. private sector employers and 64 percent of net new private sector jobs. The 115th Congress should reunite the wide variety of voices within the small business community to help educate Congress and the White House on issues that matter most to small businesses. Just as in 1995, we can leverage the collective strength and voice of small business, to make it easier to do business with the federal government, create jobs and prosperity for our country.

ACTION REQUESTED:

We urge Members of Congress to introduce and enact legislation authorizing a White House Conference on Small Business (WHCSB). Legislation is necessary in the near-term to ensure that small business issues remain at the forefront of policy discussions and also to ensure small business has a voice at the highest levels of the American government. For more information, contact [John "JB" Byrd](mailto:jbyrd@mapps.org) at jbyrd@mapps.org or 703-787-6996.