



SMC Business Councils Government Relations Progress Report 2011

Since 1944, SMC Business Councils has been the voice of Pennsylvania's small business community to lawmakers in Harrisburg and Washington, D.C. As an advocate for business-friendly, economic growth policies, part of SMC's mission is to improve the business climate for all small businesses. SMC also works to control the runaway costs of health care, lower taxes and eliminate onerous regulations that make it difficult to create and retain jobs.

SMC has recently celebrated several important victories at the state and federal level. Members and staff carried out grassroots lobbying campaigns and gave testimony and commented on issues important to small and medium-sized businesses.

In Harrisburg:

Health Care Cost Containment - SMC helped restore funding to the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council, the one agency in the state in a position to do something about escalating health care costs. Their 10% budget cut was restored at 9% and the agency is now allowed to retain 100% of the sales of data and reports.

<http://www.smc.org/government-news>

Litigation Reform - Members' grassroots lobbying efforts were instrumental in pushing for passage of the Fair Share Act, which repealed the antiquated doctrine of "Joint and Several Liabilities."

Unemployment Compensation Reform - SMC helped push through Act 6, which is a first step in reform of the Unemployment Compensation system in Pennsylvania.

The Health Insurance Exchanges (HIE) - SMC met with Pennsylvania Insurance Department (PID) Commissioner Michael Consedine, representatives of the PID and the Governor's Policy Office to discuss the impact of the HIE on small business. SMC gave comments at one of three statewide PID Listening Sessions on HIE to ensure that the small business viewpoint was considered. <http://www.smc.org/government-news>

Highmark/UPMC Contract Dispute - SMC hosted a town hall at SMC headquarters with representatives of Highmark and UPMC to discuss the impact of their contract dispute on small businesses. SMC gave testimony at the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Insurance Committee hearing on the Highmark/UPMC contract dispute at the Allegheny County Courthouse.

<http://www.smc.org/government-news>

Tax and Regulatory Reform - SMC members and staff gave testimony at the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Republican Policy Committee Hearing on "The Cost of Doing Business in PA." They presented testimony on the need for working capital, tax reform, and regulatory reform. <http://www.smc.org/government-news>

In Washington, D.C:

Paperwork Reduction - SMC lobbied and assumed a national profile in the push for repeal of the 1099 Expanded Corporate Information Reporting provision in the new Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. The provision threatened to create new filing requirements for small businesses. Repeal legislation was signed by President Obama in April.

Confirmation of Dr. Winslow Sargeant - Chief Counsel for Advocacy, the U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy - SMC supported Dr. Winslow Sargeant for full confirmation by the Senate to be Chief Counsel for Advocacy for Small Business and applauds his appointment. The Chief Counsel serves as the "in-house" voice for small

business within the federal government. If he had not been confirmed, most likely we would have been without a Chief Counsel all of next year.

Member Engagement

SMC has relationships with elected officials and they want to hear from small businesses and small manufacturers. We never let them down. One of the distinguishing features of SMC membership is our large number of politically active members who are willing to get involved with and work on the issues. Their involvement ranges from contacting lawmakers, serving on committees, developing a public policy agenda, to traveling on SMC advocacy trips.

Advocacy Trips - There's nothing like a unified presence to send a message, and for decades, SMC Business Councils has been doing that with its annual lobbying trips to the State Capitol in Harrisburg and a two-day trip to Washington, D.C.

- Thirty-five SMC members traveled to Harrisburg to advocate for small business issues at the 2011 Small Business Lobbying Day at the Capitol. SMC members attended legislative meetings with more than 25 legislators and staff. All total they visited more than 60 offices. They discussed important issues such as tort reform, taxation, access to capital, and the HIE. Senator John Pippy spoke to members at a luncheon and Auditor General Jack Wagner addressed the group at an evening reception.
- Thirty members traveled to Washington, D.C. for grassroots lobbying and visited the offices of our 14 central and western Pennsylvania congressional delegation to discuss small- and medium-sized business and manufacturers' issues. Follow-up meetings were held with representatives from Senator Toomey's office.

Government Relations Committee – The committee, which historically has met on an “as-needed” basis, adopted a monthly meeting schedule and developed new working groups on Tax, Health Care, Energy, Labor & Workforce, and Economic Development.

Each group meets independently by phone and, with the assistance of SMC staff to:

- Develop expertise on the issues
- Help write policy statements and determine SMC positions
- Advise the organization on pending legislation
- Develop a list of legislative priorities that are top of mind for small businesses

This is one step in the process of getting our voices heard by lawmakers. It will provide legislators and policymakers with a roadmap on the issues small businesses need to address in order to grow and thrive.

Annual Legislative Reception - For more than 19 years, SMC Business Councils has sponsored an Annual Legislative Reception (held in January) that brings the small business community together with federal, state and local officials. The January 2012 Annual Legislative Reception had record lawmaker attendance. The event gave members an opportunity to speak directly to elected officials about their issues. This year's special guests included the Pennsylvania Director of the Governor's Office for the South West Region, and the Pennsylvania Auditor and Attorney General.

<http://www.smc.org/government-news>

Special Meetings and Events - Members also had meetings with U.S. Congressman Rep. Tim Murphy to discuss improvements to the new health care law, Esther Vassar, National Small Business Ombudsman, Dr. Winslow Sargeant, Chief Counsel for Advocacy, the U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy and Robert Strauss, Economics and Public Policy Professor, Carnegie Mellon University. SMC was a resource partner for “Start-Up-America”, a White House event held at Chatham College. SMC members and staff attended and participated in working groups addressing business issues.

If you're interested in learning more or participating in SMC's Government Relations, please contact Eileen Anderson, SMC Government Relations Manager at 412-342-1606 or eileenanderson@smc.org.