



SMALL BUSINESS FOR PAID LEAVE

TOOLKIT

Main Street Alliance has created this toolkit to help our members and partners learn more about paid family and medical leave and join our effort. The toolkit is written specifically for small business owners on the issue. It includes basic information and action steps for advancing paid leave, from social media to hosting a meeting with policy leaders.



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INTRODUCTION

Main Street Alliance, a national network of more than 30,000 small business owners from across the country, has been making the small business case for paid family and medical leave social insurance programs since 2012. We've helped small business owners speak up to win and strengthen the policy in California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Washington and engage in campaigns in Minnesota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Vermont.

Our businesses benefit when employees can take time to care for their families and return ready to work. Paid family and medical leave helps reduce turnover and boost employee morale and loyalty, increasing productivity and cost savings for our small businesses.¹

With new opportunities to move strong paid family and medical leave policies forward nationally, Main Street Alliance has been a leader in bringing together Small Business for Paid Leave, a broad coalition effort to support small business owners in speaking out on how a social insurance paid family and medical leave program is good for their business, employees, and community.



THE SMALL BUSINESS CASE FOR PAID FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE

FOR MAIN STREET BUSINESSES, HEALTHY FAMILIES ARE PART OF OUR BOTTOM LINE.

Paid family and medical leave is a policy most people will need at one point or another, but only 17 percent of the country's workers have access to paid family leave through their employers to care for a new child or sick family member, and fewer than 40 percent have employer provided personal medical leave to care for a personal illness.²

Small businesses often lack the capital and the scale to provide benefits like paid family and medical leave, even when business owners want to provide those benefits.³ Only 9 percent workers in firms with 100 or fewer employees have access to paid family leave, compared to 23 percent of workers in firms with 500 or more employees.⁴ Many very small businesses are unable to find any affordable options through private insurers.⁵

Paid family and medical leave social insurance programs are a responsible way for small businesses to support and retain employees when serious family and medical needs arise. Such programs spread costs and minimize administrative requirements through a pool funded by small employer and employee contributions. While on qualifying leave, an employee or small business owner can draw income from the fund. During an employee's leave, employers can use the pay the employee would have otherwise earned as they see fit: hire a temporary replacement, invest in their business, or save for another use.

PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE STRENGTHENS SMALL BUSINESSES.

- Paid leave contributes to reduced turnover and higher employee morale and loyalty, leading to productivity increases and significant cost savings for small businesses.⁶
- Evaluations of existing state paid family and medical leave programs demonstrate that leave doesn't increase costs for small businesses and implementation is manageable.
- Paid family and medical leave laws help level the playing field between small businesses and large corporations, allowing small businesses to compete on more equal footing.
- Paid family and medical leave provides critical financial security for small business owners themselves.
- Paid family and medical leave dollars go right back into the local economy, boosting consumer demand at small businesses, as working people spend their increased earnings to cover the basics.



PAID LEAVE & THE FAMILY ACT: WHAT BUSINESSES NEED TO KNOW

The FAMILY Act would provide paid family and medical leave for both employees and small business owners:

What is paid family and medical leave? Paid family and medical leave is a public policy that helps people take time away from work to recover from an illness, care for a sick family member, or welcome a new child by providing them income to help cover their needs.

Who would qualify for paid family and medical leave? Nearly all working people will be eligible, including small business owners and the self-employed.

How long would someone be able to take leave for? Individuals would be eligible for a combined maximum of 12 weeks of family and medical leave in a 12-month period. Shorter leave and part-time leave would also be available.

How much would a person on leave earn? People taking qualifying leave through this program would earn 66 percent of their monthly wages up to \$4,000 per month.





How is an employee who is on leave paid? Employers would not directly pay employees who are on leave. A national paid family and medical leave fund would be established and administered by a new Office of Paid Family and Medical Leave. Individuals could apply to draw income from this fund during their leave.

How would the fund collect revenue? Revenue for the fund would be collected through employee and employer payroll contributions. Payroll contributions would cover both benefits and administrative costs.

How much would the payroll contributions be? Payroll contributions average less than \$2 per employee per week, with each employee matching those contributions



GOOD FOR SMALL BUSINESSES, EMPLOYEES & OUR COMMUNITIES.

-  **Allows small businesses to offer and access a benefit that is currently out of reach:** Enabling all employees and businesses to contribute to an insurance fund uses the power of numbers to make paid leave affordable for even the smallest businesses. Replacing a full-time employee who makes \$15/hour for 12 weeks would cost about \$5,000 in wage replacement. By comparison, an employer would contribute about \$100 to the fund for the employee each year. In turn, employers will be able to use the wages of the employee on leave to increase hours of other employees, hire a temporary replacement, invest in their business, or save for another use.
-  **Helps small businesses attract and retain great employees:** A universal paid leave program will help level the playing field between small businesses and large corporations. Currently, large corporations and other high-revenue businesses wield the market power to offer paid leave to their employees. That gives them an advantage in attracting and retaining employees. Ensuring paid leave is widely available will help small businesses become employers of choice in our communities.
-  **Increases worker productivity and reduce turnover, helping businesses with their bottom line:** Employees who can take time away from work and still receive enough income to pay their bills are much more likely to return when the period of leave ends. Employees who have access to paid leave report higher job satisfaction and loyalty, factors that increase productivity. Productive employees reduce costs and increase revenue, helping businesses grow and thrive.
-  **Increases equity:** Women and people of color are disproportionately affected by the lack of universal paid leave. People of color are less likely to hold jobs where paid leave is offered, and women more often shoulder care giving responsibilities. A national paid leave program will improve the workplace for women and people of color, creating more stable households and a stronger more equitable economy.

PAID LEAVE PRINCIPLES

To level the playing field for small business, the U.S. needs a paid family and medical leave program. Business owners and employees alike experience the need for time to recover from a serious illness, care for a sick loved one, or welcome a new child. Protecting such time is good for business. This benefit strengthens talent recruitment and retention, boosts employee morale and loyalty, and increases productivity. But small businesses lack the scale and capital to offer and administer and/or afford paid leave. We need a national paid family and medical leave social insurance program that meets these needs and principles.

COVERAGE

Ensure maximum benefit of the program to small businesses:

- All business sizes and configurations covered, and all owners, self-employed people, and employees (whether part-time, full-time, or seasonal) covered, with no carve-outs or opt-outs.
- Parental, family, and serious personal medical needs covered without gender distinction. Minimum 12 weeks leave.
- Inclusive, simple family definition to meet the needs of today's workforce.

COSTS

Responsible and self-sustaining funding to make leave affordable for businesses of all sizes:

- Cost shared between employers and employees.
- Maintain spending power of leave beneficiaries through progressive wage replacement with up to full replacement for lower-wage workers.
- Social insurance model, spreading costs across all businesses and business types and across all income level of employees and include a dedicated funding stream (that does not harm other essential programs).

IMPLEMENTATION & ADMINISTRATION

Designed to support employers and provide stability to businesses:

- Public administration of federal program to maximize simplicity and ensure funding applied to benefits, not third-party profit.
- Extensive outreach and technical assistance for businesses to launch and address issues such as extended employee absence, and stability and predictability for employees as they return to work.
- Focus on ease of implementation for small business.
- Federal program sets benefit floor, not ceiling: States and businesses can enhance benefits set by federal standards.

These principles were developed by the Small Business for Paid Leave coalition. Visit smallbusinessforpaidleave.com/principles for complete principles.

“IT’S TIME TO LISTEN TO THE SMALL BUSINESSES WHO ARE SHOWING UP AND TESTIFYING IN SUPPORT OF THIS CRITICAL PROGRAM. WE WANT TO GET BACK TO THE BUSINESS OF RUNNING OUR BUSINESSES – AND WE WANT LAWMAKERS DO THEIR JOBS AND PASS PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE INSURANCE.”

— **Sarah Piepenberg**, Owner of Vinaigrette in Minneapolis



Sarah Piepenberg shares her story with new members of congress at a round table on paid leave.

TAKE ACTION

STEP 1: SIGN ON & SHARE YOUR STORY

Small business owners from across the country are showing their support for robust paid leave like the FAMILY Act. We have power in numbers, and your powerful stories about why paid leave is important to you, your employees and community matter.

- SIGN OUR SMALL BUSINESS OWNER LETTER IN SUPPORT OF PAID LEAVE
- WORKSHEET TO BUILD YOUR OWN PAID LEAVE STORY

STEP 2: RAISE YOUR VOICE: PREPARING TO SPEAK PUBLICLY ON PAID LEAVE

Learn more about paid leave policy options and how you can be a leader, advocating for strong paid leave. Get ready for opposition talking points as well!

- SMALL BUSINESS TALKING POINTS
- RESPONDING TO THE OPPOSITION'S TALKING POINTS
- SAMPLE OPINION EDITORIALS

STEP 3: TALK TO POLICY LEADERS ABOUT PAID LEAVE

Our public officials want to hear from small business owners about their priorities. These materials will help you plan for those conversations.

- SAMPLE LETTER TO ASK FOR A MEETING
- TIPS FOR A MEETING WITH DECISION-MAKERS
- MATERIALS TO BRING TO MEETINGS

STEP 4: AMPLIFY SMALL BUSINESS VOICES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

By sharing and interacting with small business stories on social media platforms, you can help ensure small business voices are driving policy change.

- SHARING NEWS LINKS
- CREATING ORIGINAL CONTENT
- LINKING TO REPORTS/PUBLICATIONS



Add your name!

SMALL BUSINESS FOR PAID LEAVE SIGN ON LETTER

For Main Street businesses, healthy families are part of our bottom line. Most of us will need to provide care at some point in our life either to welcome a new baby, care for an aging parent, or for our own unexpected health crisis like cancer. That shouldn't be a financial struggle for any of us, whether we're a business owner or an employee.

Our businesses benefit when employees can take time to care for their families and return ready to work. Paid leave helps reduce turnover and boost employee morale and loyalty, increasing productivity and cost savings for our small businesses.

Few people have access to paid leave, though. Fixing this is a key part of helping Main Street and making our country more equal. The racial wealth gap means employees and business owners of color have less financial cushion for taking time off, but they also have more limited access to paid leave. And, with most care giving still falling to women, paid leave is an important gender equity measure for business owners and employees alike.

Main Street businesses can't go it alone. Large corporations wield the market power to offer paid family and medical leave. We don't.

That's why we support the creation of a **national paid family and medical leave social insurance program**, to help small businesses and families in emergencies and times of need and that:

- Helps small businesses recruit and retain valued employees and create secure, stable jobs;
- Lets employees and business owners take 12 weeks of qualifying leave each year to care for a seriously ill family member, welcome a new child, or take care of one's own health needs;
- Increases financial security by providing wage replacement to enable employees to take time off and meet their expenses;
- Spreads the cost of leave through a self-sustaining national insurance fund with small employee and employer contributions (estimated at less than \$2 each week);
- Covers freelancers and the self-employed;
- Provides leave to care for parents, children, spouses, domestic partners, and other family; and
- Is publicly administered to ensure ease of administration by small business.

It's time for Congress to give Main Street businesses a fighting chance. Lawmakers in six states and the District of Columbia have adopted paid family and medical leave programs -- with strong results for Main Street businesses and their employees. We want Congress to build on that success with a national program. We support **The Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act (H. 1185/S. 463)**, a paid family and medical leave program that works for Main Street.

Big corporations win and small businesses struggle when lawmakers fail to act. Let's level the playing field for small businesses, strengthen economic opportunities for our families and communities, and promote greater racial and gender equity by passing strong paid family and medical leave legislation.

NAME

BUSINESS NAME

CITY, STATE

EMAIL

PHONE

- I AM THE OWNER I CAN SIGN FOR THE BUSINESS

Return completed forms to info@mainstreetalliance.org or Main Street Alliance, 1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, 11th Floor, #242, Washington DC, 20009 or complete this form online at mainstreetalliance.org/support_the_family_act.

YOUR STORIES HELP US BUILD MOMENTUM TO WIN

Small business owner stories about how paid leave – or the lack of it – has impacted you, your business and employees are helping build the public will to win this policy. Your voice and story make a difference. Practically everyone has an experience they can share. These questions are designed to help you build out your own small business case for paid leave.

- Have you needed to take time away from your business to care for a new child, recover from an illness or take care of a sick loved one and haven't been able to do so? How did that affect you, your family and your business?
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- Have you taken leave from your business despite lack of access to a paid leave program? How did that impact your business?
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- Has an employee of yours needed to take time away from work but not done so because they couldn't afford to miss work? Did this affect your employee's performance?
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- Have you lost an employee who has left because they needed to take time away from work for family or medical reasons? How did losing this employee impact your business?
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- Has the lack of a paid leave plan affected your ability to hire the employees you need? Have recruits chosen other offers where paid leave was available? Would access to paid leave improve recruitment and diversity on your staff?
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RAISE YOUR VOICE

PREPARING TO SPEAK PUBLICLY ON PAID LEAVE

Now that you have the elements of your personal story outlined, use these talking points to help you write your letter to the editor, op-ed column, or public remarks.

Small Businesses Like Mine Need a National Paid Family and Medical Leave Program

- I own and run a business that [describe your business]. I employ [number] people, and each of those employees helps make my business a success.
- It's important to me and my business to respect and value my employees as full people. I know that, like everyone, sometimes they need to care for a sick family member, to welcome a new baby, or to recover from a serious illness.
- But private insurance companies don't offer good, affordable paid family and medical leave policies for businesses like mine. There just isn't profit in it for them.
- Main Street businesses can't go it alone. Large corporations wield the market power to offer paid family and medical leave. We don't. This gives corporate America one more leg up on small businesses and means we lose valued, talented employees.
- The lack of a national paid leave program has hurt my business. [Describe how. e.g. I've had employees leave the business because of illness, new parenthood, I've needed to take time away from my business but couldn't, I've had a recruit choose a big firm over mine because of benefits they offered, etc.]
- A national paid family and medical leave program would help my bottom line. It would help us retain valued employees, increase employee loyalty and productivity and reduce our turnover costs. It also would strengthen the families and communities that sustain a business like mine.
- A paid leave program also would make our country more equal. The fact is that women still shoulder most care giving, and paid leave makes it more likely that women will return to work, return to their previous employer, and with the same or higher wages -- all key to equalizing the workplace for them. We also have a racial wealth gap that means employees and business owners of color have less financial cushion for taking time off.
- A paid leave program would help make our country more democratic. Right now, large corporations are calling the shots on who gets paid leave and who doesn't. Using our strength in numbers, we can create a national paid leave program that pools resources and levels the playing field.
- The FAMILY Act would establish a national insurance pool, funded by small contributions (of about \$2 a week) from both businesses and employees. Employees and employers who need time off to care for a family member or themselves can get up to 12 weeks with their pay covered up to 66 percent of their income, capped at \$4,000 per month.
- A solid majority of small business owners from around the country support such a program and are calling on Congress to act. The lack of a national paid family and medical leave program is a problem our elected officials can and should fix.

SEE HOW OTHERS HAVE DONE IT

Sample OpEds from the Main Street Alliance network.

The Register-Guard

Paid medical and family leave benefits workers, businesses

By Sabrina Parson, Owner, Palo Alto Software, Eugene, OR

...

Workers and small business owners alike should have the time and financial security to deal with sudden and serious events like these, just as parents should be able to welcome a new child. No one should be forced to choose between their families or health over their jobs and financial stability.

It's not just the right thing to do; paid family and medical leave is a boon for my business. Paid leave helps my company recruit and retain talented, loyal employees. It attracts women professionals to work in a male-dominated industry. And it reduces turnover, a huge cost for small businesses, averaging 20 percent of an employee's annual salary across industries.

...⁷



Good for business, good for families

By Ricky Klein, co-owner Groennfell Meadery, Colchester, VT

...[W]e believe in creating portable benefit structures — like paid family and medical leave insurance — that ensure all working Vermonters are able to have access to this needed support, regardless of where they work. It's a win-win for Vermont workers and Vermont's small employers.

Strategic, smart policies that reflect the interconnected relationship between our small businesses and local communities will preserve the culture we all love in our towns and villages, improve the lives of Vermonters, help small businesses thrive, and encourage economic growth by making our state an attractive place to live, work and raise a family.

As a small business owner who would contribute to this insurance pool, I see [this bills] as an opportunity for us to come together to support one another to create healthy communities for our businesses, families members, neighbors, and future generations.

...⁸

RESPONDING TO THE OPPOSITION'S TALKING POINTS

As we work to advance paid leave in our states and nationally, we hear a lot of the same opposition talking points about paid leave. Here are their most common arguments – especially those related to small business – and essential points to refute them. Remember to lead with our message and avoid using the opposition frame.

OPPONENTS MESSAGE	OUR CORE MESSAGE
COST/TAXES	
Small business won't be able to afford it.	<p>Small businesses can't afford to offer paid family and medical leave now, and they're hurting financially because of it.</p> <p>A paid family and medical leave social insurance program would spread costs and make paid leave affordable.</p> <p>Now, only big corporations and wealthy small firms can afford paid leave. Let's level the playing field for Main Street.</p>
<p>The math doesn't work.</p> <p>Funds will go insolvent.</p> <p>This will cost millions.</p>	<p>For Main Street businesses, the highest cost is the cost of doing nothing.</p> <p>A paid family and medical leave program that spreads costs will mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small businesses have more dollars to invest/expand • Employees have ongoing income to spend in local economies <p>Does this cost money? Yes. For the impact we need, we have to make a real investment</p>
<p>Program will be tax increase on working people.</p> <p>It's a regressive tax.</p>	<p>Employees at Main Street businesses are at a disadvantage because their employers can't afford paid leave on their own.</p> <p>With small contributions, we can fund progressive wage benefits for employees and business owners in times of need.</p>
Paid leave is a nice luxury, but it isn't a necessity.	<p>Caring for family and oneself is a basic need, not a luxury.</p> <p>Small business owners recognize this, and that's why they're clamoring for a paid leave program.</p>
HURTS ECONOMY/BUSINESS	
Paid leave is a jobs killer.	<p>Without paid leave, small businesses are losing valued employees and dollars they need to expand and hire more people.</p> <p>Millions of women leave the workforce each year because of lawmakers' failure to create a paid leave program. Paid leave is a job retention policy.</p>
<p>Cost of finding temporary workers is a double tax.</p> <p>Workforce shortage makes it hard to find replacements.</p>	<p>Paid leave programs help employers by freeing up money to hire a temporary worker or expand hours of existing staff when a valued employee is taking needed time away.</p> <p>Replacing an employee short-term may be hard, but replacing an employee long-term is even harder.</p> <p>In most states with paid leave, businesses are often able to cover the work by shifting work around or bringing past workers back in.</p>

RESPONDING TO THE OPPOSITION'S TALKING POINTS CONTINUED

OPONENTS MESSAGE	OUR CORE MESSAGE
HURTS ECONOMY/BUSINESS CONTINUED	
Everyone will use leave every year.	<p>People now are going without leave, or losing their jobs. Their families, the businesses they work for and our economy need stability.</p> <p>A small percentage of the workforce uses leave where it exists. But everyone is more secure by having it in place.</p>
Companies that offer generous leave will cut it.	In states with paid leave, we've seen that the policies set a floor and best-practice employers that can afford more generous benefits keep them -- it gives them a competitive advantage.
VOLUNTARY PROGRAMS ARE BETTER	
One size doesn't fit all.	We have the opportunity to create a universal program that fits the needs of all businesses, all workers, and all families. Why would we pass that up?
Business knows best what works for their employees.	Beside, small businesses don't want to replicate their experience of shopping for health insurance, with an array of confusing, expensive choices. They want a simple, easy-to-use program.
Carrot approach is better than a stick! We should do tax credits instead.	<p>In overwhelming proportions, real small businesses want a universal paid leave program.</p> <p>Tax credits help giant corporations, not your local store.</p>
Should be opt-in and voluntary, not mandated.	<p>Real small businesses are saying that a universal system covering all businesses is the solution that works for them.</p> <p>Bringing everyone in is the most effective and secure way to spread costs and keep benefits affordable.</p>
Not needed - most businesses offer paid leave.	Many businesses offer paid vacation and sick time - nowhere near the time the people need to care for a child or a major illness.
Hurts businesses that use to leave to recruit	Lack of a paid leave social insurance program tilts the playing field toward large corporations.
WOMEN & LOW-INCOME	
Something only women will use.	<p>While caregiving still falls mainly on women, people of all genders are caregivers. And when men's wages are replaced at an adequate rate and they know they have a job to come back to, their use of paid leave goes up significantly.</p> <p>As for medical leave, anyone can have a heart attack or get cancer.</p>
This will hurt women's hiring and promotion.	Supporting family is one of the best ways we can support women in the workforce, including women business owners.
Program should target low-income workers.	The federal shutdown helps shine a light on how most working people live paycheck to paycheck. By having everyone contribute, the pool is more cost-effective and sustainable.

RESPONDING TO THE OPPOSITION'S TALKING POINTS CONTINUED

OPPONENTS MESSAGE	OUR CORE MESSAGE
PRIVATE BETTER THAN PUBLIC	
<p>Bettors option in private insurance market</p>	<p>Private insurance companies don't offer affordable products that meet the needs of small businesses or their employees. This market is even worse than health insurance.</p> <p>Paid leave dollars should pay for time off to care for family and ourselves, not corporate profit.</p> <p>A public social insurance model is the best way to ensure that program dollars go to benefits, not third-party profit.</p>
<p>We support concept – but not run by government</p>	<p>This kind of problem is exactly what our government was designed to solve. This is something elected officials should address instead of pushing the issue back on small businesses.</p> <p>Small businesses should be able to focus on the products and services they were set up to offer</p>
<p>Private insurer or administrator better than government creating brand-new system.</p>	<p>We need a program that's publicly run and administered like unemployment insurance [or other good state program].</p> <p>Small businesses want the simpler administration and benefits system provided by a social insurance program. They don't want to replicate their confusing experience with the ACA.</p> <p>Giving our public programs to corporations increases racial discrimination. Government pools create more equal access.</p>
<p>State workers don't know what they're doing.</p>	<p>No one's better placed to administer a social insurance program than trained state agency staff that's accountable to the public good – not shareholders.</p>

These talking points were developed together by Family Values at Work and Main Street Alliance.



TALKING TO POLICY LEADERS ABOUT PAID FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE

Requesting a Meeting: Call the office where you would like to meet to find out how they take meeting requests. Some policy leaders will have a standardized meeting request form or special scheduling email address which can expedite the process.

REQUESTING A MEETING

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to request a meeting with [POLICY MAKER'S TITLE & NAME] to discuss small business support for paid leave.

I am a constituent and the owner of [BUSINESS NAME], with stores in xx and a member of Main Street Alliance, a national network of small business owners advocating for policies that benefit our businesses, our employees, and our communities.

Small businesses like mine lack the capital and the scale to provide earned benefits like paid family and medical leave, even when we want to provide those benefits. We are losing talented employees to large corporations, which wield the market power to give good benefits to top managers but are squeezing everyone else with low-wage, uncertain jobs.

Paid family and medical leave laws make paid leave affordable and accessible to small businesses, both leveling the playing field between small businesses and large corporations and increasing economic security for small business owners and their employees. States and municipalities across the country are showing these laws help create a more equitable Main Street. Now it's time for Congress to make paid family and medical leave a reality for everyone in the country. The Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act (S. 337/H.R. 947) would create an affordable, self-sustaining national family and medical leave insurance program.

We look forward to meeting with [POLICY MAKER'S TITLE & NAME] to share my own experience and this issue in more depth. I can be reached at [PHONE NUMBER].

Thank you,

[YOUR FIRST & LAST NAME]

If you do not get a response to your meeting request within a week, follow up with a phone call and ask to speak to the scheduler.

BEFORE THE MEETING

Clarify your goal & priorities: Why are you meeting with the official? To solidify support? To win support for your position? To weaken opposition?

What is your strategy: What is your primary demand? What will you ask for if the answer is yes? What if the answer is no, or a waffle? Here are things you can ask: Written support for your position; Introduce legislation; co-sponsor existing legislation; Write a letter to legislative leadership supporting position; Attend a press conference announcing support.

Meeting agenda & roles: Draft a written agenda & select speakers for each part of agenda.

TALKING TO POLICY LEADERS ABOUT PAID FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE

IN THE MEETING

Deliver a clear, compelling message. Your message isn't just a list of bulleted policy points, but should address why the official should care and act. Start by telling your story. Why do you care about this issue, and why are you moved to act? Then provide local context. Make a strong connection between the issue and your local community that the legislator represents. Use local examples to illustrate the importance of your issue.

Demonstrate your power. Who do you represent? How many members? Are you a constituent? What does your business mean to the district?

Politely control the conversation. Remember what you came for. Politicians/staff often control conversations with small talk, talking about things other than the issue at hand, or asking questions they know you can't answer. Stay focused on your agenda and diplomatically move the conversation where you want it to go.

Make a hard ask & be strategic in your response. "Can we count on you to support the principles we've laid out?" Pause and wait for an answer. Thank supporters and help turn them into champions. Neutralize the opposition, but don't waste too much time trying to argue with them.

IF THEY SUPPORT YOU...

- Thank them, and thank them again
- Be a resource. If they need information or help, offer to make that available to them.
- Try to move them from being a supporter to a champion of your cause.

IF THEY OPPOSE YOU...

- Thank them for their time but express disappointment.
- Tell them that this is a voting issue for you.

IF THEY REMAIN UNDECIDED...

- Try to understand their reservations and continue to communicate with them.
- If they need additional information, be sure you get it to them in a timely manner.
- Think about whose voice is important to them and try to mobilize it on your behalf.

AFTER THE MEETING

Debrief the meeting. Take a few minutes to debrief with others from your team who attended the meeting. Make sure you heard the same thing, and agree on follow up activities. Talk through what you each did especially well and what could be strengthened. Assign follow up tasks.

Share what you learned. Be sure to contact Main Street Alliance staff with what you learned in the meeting including: any commitments made, key questions or concerns raised, any additional information needed.

Recognition. Share a post about the meeting on social media (with the photo you took in the meeting!) Send a follow up note with any information you said you would send promptly.

Remember materials for your meeting: Business Case for Paid Leave Fact Sheet, Main Street Alliance Storybook, Main Street Alliance State Specific Report, etc.

AMPLIFY SMALL BUSINESS VOICES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

SHARING EARNED MEDIA

Any time you see small business voices showing up in the news in support of paid leave, you can easily amplify these messages by sharing a link on social media.

When sharing OpEds, LTEs, or news stories, include a short quote from the piece that encourages the viewer to click through or share, while still capturing the overall message. Credit/tag author/business owner/spokesperson when possible.

Past Main Street small business OpEds for you to share today:

[SMALL BUSINESSES NEED REAL PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE](#)

[GOOD FOR BUSINESS, GOOD FOR FAMILIES](#)

[PAID MEDICAL AND FAMILY LEAVE BENEFITS WORKERS, BUSINESSES](#)

SHARING DATA AND REPORTS

Every good policy proposal is backed up by good data. If something resonated with you, share a link and your thoughts/interpretation.

Example 1: #MainStreet #SmallBiz owners want a national #paidleave solution so that we can care for ourselves and our employees in times of need. This collection of stories by Main Street Alliance illustrates the need for paid leave policies that are publicly managed, inclusive and easy to access <link>

Example 2: #SmallBiz owners share why they believe #PaidLeave is critical to healthy local economies. Some stories illustrate how existing statewide paid leave programs support small businesses, others demonstrate the ripple effect the lack of supportive policies has on all of us. <link>

ORIGINAL SOCIAL CONTENT

Every brand or business with a social media presence has established its voice, adding paid leave to this platform is simple.

- Keep your message true to your business. Example: Snooty Fox Tea Shop Equal Pay Day
- Make it personal. Celebrate your efforts. Share an action shot with a personal description about why you're doing what you're doing. Example: MN Small Business Owner in Action
- Videos on social platforms are 12 times more likely to be shared than text and images combined, and today's smartphone technology makes them really easy to produce.
 1. Film in a quiet environment or with as little background noise as possible - unless it really adds to your story (e.g. rally or large group event)
 2. Hold your phone stationary or prop it up on something.
 3. Film in landscape orientation - unless filming for an Instagram story.
 4. Keep it short and to the point.

FACEBOOK: MAIN STREET ALLIANCE ACTION FUND | TWITTER: @MAINSTREETWEETS | INSTAGRAM: @MAINSTREETALLIANCE_

ENDNOTES

- 1 <https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/CostofTurnover.pdf>
 - 2 <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2018/employee-benefits-in-the-united-states-march-2018.pdf>
 - 3 The View from Main Street: Paid Family and Medical Leave 2018 Report, Main Street Alliance
 - 4 <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/23/access-to-paid-family-leave-varies-widely-across-employers-industries/>
 - 5 <https://www.minnpost.com/community-voices/2019/04/the-cost-of-inaction-on-paid-family-and-medical-leave/>
 - 6 <https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/CostofTurnover.pdf>
 - 7 <https://www.registerguard.com/opinion/20180814/paid-medical-and-family-leave-benefits-workers-businesses>
 - 8 <https://vtdigger.org/2019/03/21/ricky-klein-good-business-good-families/>
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Libby Spehar, Owner of Snooty Fox Tea Shop in Duluth, MN, meets with Minnesota Governor Tim Walz.



Kelly Conklin, Co-Owner, Foley Waite LLC in Kenilworth, NJ, meets with U.S. Representative Andy Kim.