



2023 IMPACT REPORT

the
MAIN STREET
alliance



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



It has been over three years since our world shifted in ways we have never experienced before. In the aftermath of COVID-19, we have become bombarded with unprecedented stories of war, impacts of climate change, mass shootings, and the pace of 24 hour news cycle that can make any rational person lose faith and hope. In the words of Cher, “If I could turn back time ...” I would find a way to really take heed of all the AI future promising the movie Terminator suggested, and

prophetic words of Octavia Butler.

Who knew, that world domination might not be good for humans and the environment.

I am teasing, in part - but it is easy to get down or just tune all the way out, especially for small business owners who have the weight of keeping the business open for you, your employees, and the community.

So, who has time to organize?

I want to acknowledge that finding time to invest in the community, and remain vigilant on policy issues when the world is both figuratively and literally on fire is difficult. But we got to do it.

In times like these, we need to remember that ordinary people

can do hard things when we take a moment to be human with one another. When we start to have conversations and uncover our connecting points, and identify solutions to immediate problems. Not just sharing a social post, or signing on to a letter - we need to act and make real changes for our communities.

As you well know, small business owners play a critical role in passing state and federal legislation. Often the narrative of small business owners are co-opted by corporations who own the voice. That’s where Main Street Alliance enters the space to help inform, organize, and support leaders who share our values to run for change.

We are witnessing a resurgence of labor organizers fighting to hold large corporations accountable for the excess of wealth that has been extracted from our communities and must be demanded back. The members of Main Street Alliance are organizing to fight for public investments like; Paid Family Medical Leave, Child Care, Retirement, and other public goods that not only support employees, but the owner as well.

We have had a great year, and as we move into 2024, we seek your continued support both financially and time to build the small business movement.



MSA members and staff at the 2023 Organizing Training

IMPACT REPORT

The notion that all businesses, big and small, share the same interests isn't just wrong; it is a powerful, pervasive myth. True small businesses face unique challenges due to a lack of investment in our care economy, such as a national paid leave program or childcare support. Meanwhile, big businesses have used federal and state-level policies to amass even greater wealth. MSA leads with values rooted in equity and inclusion, focusing on underrepresented people. MSA members represent the social fabric of our communities, specifically Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTQIA+, and those living in rural communities. Typically, they create their businesses without access to outside capital and feel the impact of discrimination daily.

MSA works with small business owners on the issues that affect them through organizing, being proactive in communities, and developing meaningful relationships. We organize, educate, and build the power of small businesses by providing training, technical assistance, community-based research, and traditional and distributed organizing. We focus on core issues for strategic public investment that support the Main Street economy nationwide. This report highlights some of our most recent successes.



MSA Member Violeta Rotstein at the Day of Action

— ” —

I wish everyone knew how multi-skilled and multi-knowledgeable you have to be to run your business solo. But also that you don't have to do it all alone, that it's nearly impossible without a strong community around you.

Artists need to organize because I think too often we are told that to choose the arts for a living means we are "supposed" to suffer and struggle to pay bills. I believe we all deserve to make a living wage, no matter your career field.

VIOLETA ROTSTEIN
VIOLETA ROTSTEIN ART & ILLUSTRATION
ST. PAUL MN

— ” —

ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

MSA's most effective strategy is our ability to create systems-change advocacy through community organizing. By building strong relationships through grassroots organizing, MSA identifies and supports small business owners to create opportunities for engagement, collective learning, and action based on the needs of small business owners. MSA deliberately shifted our organizing strategy this past year to build a more robust national infrastructure.

Over the past year, MSA led organizing efforts on policy issues, including anti-monopoly, tax fairness, capital access, care economy, and universal health care. MSA is focused on organizing small business owners to harness their collective power and build broad-based support for an equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports a vibrant Main Street economy nationwide. MSA small business leaders in multiple states spoke out, published op-eds, met with officials, and testified before state and Federal committees to tell their personal stories related to the care economy, such as paid leave and child care. Highlights include:



- **Over 60 MSA members in Madison, WI showed up for the day of action supporting Child Care Counts.** Members like owners Chef Dan Jacobs, Chef AJ Dixon, and others attended the Joint Finance Committee hearing in Waukesha, where they provided their testimonies on their experience as a small business and why they support the continuation of the state Child Care Counts program, expanding the state's Medicaid program, and creating a state-backed paid family leave program.
- **MSA small business owner Corrine Hendrickson [testified on Capitol Hill](#) to support investments in child care.** Hendrickson talked extensively about how small businesses have different benefits than larger businesses regarding economies of scale, access to capital, taxes, and what the government could do to help small businesses — and their communities — thrive.
- **One of our most significant successes came with the passage of The Paid Family & Medical Leave program in Minnesota.** In April, MSA and members participated in a Day of Action in MN to win a commitment from the legislature and Governor for Paid Family and Medical Leave. In May, the Governor signed this bill into law, and it will go into effect in 2026.

“What if our small businesses were fairly invested in according to the value they provide in goods and services to our local economy, increased ingenuity, increased competition, therefore increasing quality of those products and services along with the quality of life of our community members? From the perspective of small businesses, our government is choosing to focus on big business and corporations, ignoring the dire needs of small businesses around the country, eliminating the opportunity to truly live up to the American dream.”

- Corrine Hendrickson, MSA Member, Owner and Operator of Corrine's Little Explorers Family Child Care rural New Glarus, WI

BUILDING THE POWER OF SMALL BUSINESSES

MSA launched a series of in-person and virtual trainings to educate and engage small business owners nationwide. We also worked with MSA members to educate policymakers and local officials. Highlights of this work include:

- **Thirty MSA members from 10 states attended meetings with 25 congressional offices, the U.S. Department of Treasury, and the White House.** During these meetings, MSA members discussed issues concerning their businesses with policymakers, including corporate concentration's damaging effects, equitable tax policy, creating a care economy with paid child care, medical and family leave, and a strengthened healthcare system. Additionally, members discussed recommendations to improve access to capital for returning citizen entrepreneurs and business owners participating in second-chance hiring.
- This year we launched Organizing for Power, a three-day signature training event. **In March 2023, small business owners from seven states, including returning citizen entrepreneurs from MN, WI, and MD, learned practical ways to organize and build power for community-focused, people-centered small businesses and local economies and a future prioritizing good jobs, equity, and community.** As part of this cohort, small business owners receive ongoing training, support, and connections to peer leaders nationwide to support their engagement as influential leaders in public life, organizing effectively for change in their communities.
- MSA Run for Change program provides small business owners with the leadership skills and technical assistance to create systemic change. This program offers small business owners seeking to run for public offices and or elected leadership roles with training, campaign support, and network building.



MAIN STREET ALLIANCE SUPPORTS UPDATED MERGER GUIDELINES

Chanda Causer, MSA Executive Director, joined FTC Chair Khan and Assistant Attorney General Jonathan Kanter for an American Economic Liberties Project event to highlight the new merger guidelines.

MSA discussed the continued need for action around the enforcement of our antitrust laws. Stating that for far too long, U.S. Antitrust enforcement has been sclerotic. With a growing movement and decision-makers in positions of power to address this, MSA is optimistic about the direction policy is headed on this issue and is excited to bring the small business voice to this fight. [Watch the event on demand here.](#)

”We commend the FTC for taking action against Amazon, as this is a significant step towards creating an inclusive economy for all to have a fair opportunity to achieve the American Dream.”

CHANDA CAUSER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
MAIN STREET ALLIANCE

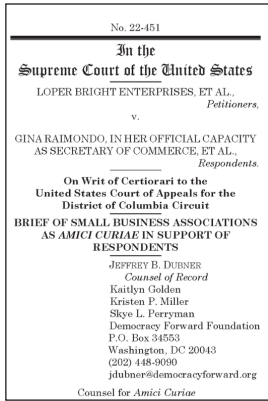
THE FUTURE OF GENDER EQUALITY THREE YEARS INTO THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC



MSA Executive Director, Chanda Causer, was a panelist at New America’s Better Life Lab and the Council on Contemporary Families event on The Future of Gender Equality in a Post-Pandemic Society. At that event, Causer shared how MSA organizes small businesses around issues directly affecting women-owned small businesses. You can [watch the event on demand](#) here.



MSA Member Caitlin Rogers and MSA Staff Mel Shu Fen Koe at the May Small Business Month Fly-in.



RURAL ACTION POLICY REPORT

MSA joined over 30 organizations and local elected officials from various geographic and strategic backgrounds to identify the most pressing and popular policies impacting our communities. Rural organizers share first-person accounts of winning on renewable energy, rural power building, giant corporations and their threats to small businesses, and the barriers to policy implementation. The report also provides a catalog of recent policy victories plus guidelines for successful federal implementation.

The [2023 Rural Policy Action Report](#) is more than a document discussing policy. It also serves as a call to action. Policies that work for working people and rural communities work for America. When grassroots organizations, policy groups, and rural leaders work alongside state and federal leaders to advance policies that make a difference, we all win. Together, we can build an economy from the bottom up and the middle out.

AMICUS BRIEF

Courts often hear cases that have significant implications for American businesses, communities, or individuals. But the parties in those cases may not represent those groups' interests -- or may even be adverse to them. For this reason, it's often important for groups like Main Street Alliance to file "amicus briefs," briefs which explain a topic that they want the court to have in mind when it makes its decision. **In partnership with Democracy Forward. Main Street Alliance has given voice to the needs of small businesses on issues critical to small businesses and our priorities.** Among these are the need for predictable taxation and regulation, the benefits of workplace safety regulations, and the protection of worker wages.

Amicus Briefs filed in 2023:

- January 25, 2023: Allstates Refractory Contractors, LLC v. Walsh
- April 5, 2023: National Small Business United v. Yellen
- October 18, 2023 Moore v. United States



Northern Plains Resource Council members gather for water well monitoring

**2023
RURAL
POLICY
ACTION
REPORT**

Rein in unchecked corporate greed and safeguard the power of workers, small businesses, and family farmers to build a good life

COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

Our research efforts prioritize and frame issues that matter to small business owners. We use this information to educate and build a collective impact among small businesses and inform the public and policymakers on the crucial role true small businesses play in the economy and our communities and their unique challenges. Here are some highlights from the past year:



POLICY BRIEF: CHAMPIONING ACCESS TO CAPITAL FOR BLACK FARMERS

CAPITAL ACCESS FOR BLACK FARMERS

MSA is committed to addressing the systemic barriers Black farmers encounter to create a more equitable and just agricultural industry, as Black farmers support the rural Main Street economy. Working alongside farmers, MSA will advocate for policies to ensure timely access to credit and capital access, resources, and land to improve conditions for Black farmers and the communities they serve. We conducted community-based research and released the [Championing Access for Black Farmers policy brief](#). **This project helped propel our work in understanding the need for reinvestment in Black Farmers and create recommendations to educate policymakers to address the long-term issues and make changes.** As part of the paper release, we held an event at the Capitol Building that attracted small business owners, congressional staff, and coalition partners.



REENTRY SMALL BUSINESS BARRIERS: CAPITAL ACCESS

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Reentry entrepreneurs and employers play an integral part in the circular economy and are frequently underrepresented. Small business owners, regardless of their background, face significant challenges. However, these challenges are notably heightened for reentry small business owners with criminal histories. MSA conducted a one-year pilot to conduct community-based research to uncover the gaps in changing the national conversation on criminal justice and make meaningful progress toward policy change by centering the voices of returning citizen small business owners. Key activities in the pilot project included community-based research, [a storytelling project](#), canvassing, and developing a [concept brief](#). This project helped propel our work in understanding barriers returning citizens face when starting small businesses or small businesses ability to hire.

COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH



Vermont Small Business Environment Assessment for Underrepresented Communities

COMMUNITY NAVIGATOR PILOT PROGRAM | SEPTEMBER 2023

SUBMITTED BY



COMMUNITY NAVIGATOR PILOT PROGRAM

In 2022 and 2023, MSA worked alongside partners in Vermont to develop the Community Navigator Pilot Program. The pilot program aims at reducing barriers that all small businesses — including those owned by disadvantaged groups such as veterans, women, and those from rural communities — often face in accessing critical support. As part of this project, we identified gap areas of financial, digital, and legal literacy while increasing cultural knowledge, awareness, and greater sensitivity through diversity, equity, and inclusivity efforts across Vermont’s technical assistance provider network. [Read the report here.](#)



For generations, small businesses have been the lifeblood of the American economy, rooted in and lifting up their communities. But increasing monopoly power poses an existential threat to America’s true small businesses—and with it, our economy and our democracy.

In industry after industry, corporate concentration is growing, and competition is declining to dangerously low levels.¹ That’s why Main Street Alliance’s small business owners are fighting back across the country against the rise of monopoly power and standing up for the fairer, kinder, community-rooted capitalism we deserve.

WHY MAIN STREET ALLIANCE IS FIGHTING BACK AGAINST MONOPOLY POWER

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FINANCIALS



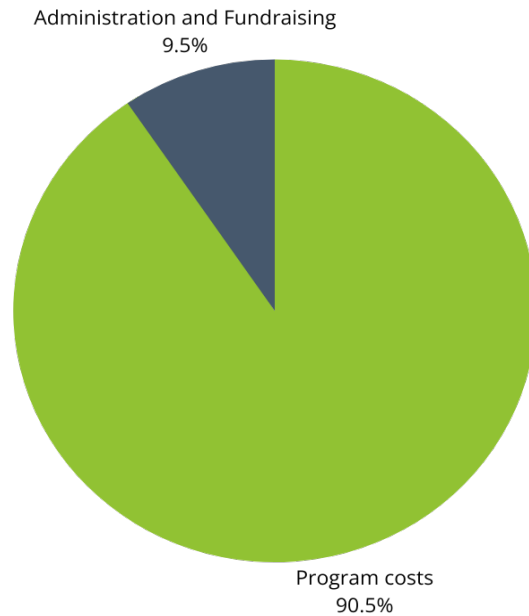
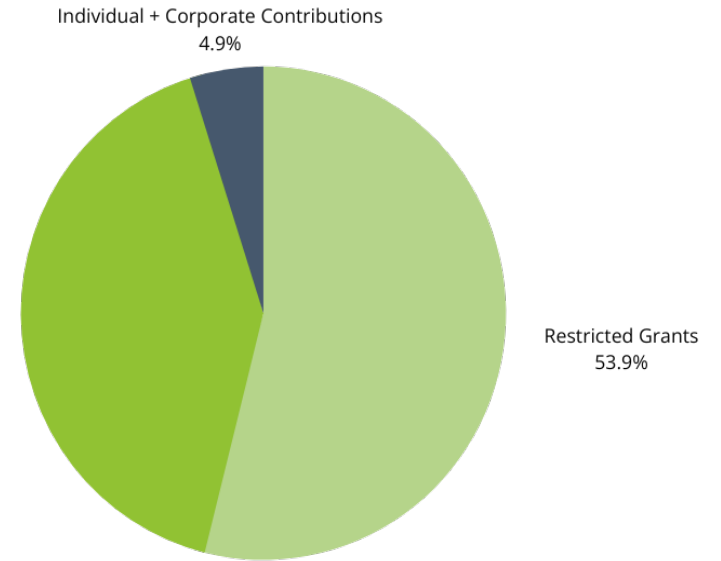
MSA Member Francesca Hong and MSA Staff Naomi Smith at the May Small Business Month Fly In



MSA at the ROC United Restaurant Worker Bill of Rights press briefing.



MSA Summer 2023 Board Retreat





MSA IS THE NATION'S LEADING ORGANIZATION FOR TRUE SMALL BUSINESSES.
We support local communities to push grassroots initiatives that work to create a more just economy and inclusive society. Visit our [website to learn more](#).