SSDA-AT Remembers Rep. John Dingell

By Roy Littlefield

Former Rep. John Dingell, the longest serving member of Congress on record and a politician whose voice loomed large even after he left Capitol Hill, passed away. He was 92.

"John Dingell was a giant legislator on behalf of the people," said House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer. He described Dingell as a "tireless advocate" who fought for clean air, clean water, consumer protections and financial regulations throughout his nearly six decades in Congress.

Of that time, he served on the Energy and Commerce Committee for nearly 58 years, making Dingell the longest serving member on any congressional committee. He served as chairman of the committee for more than 15 years.

Dingell, whose district was home to the Ford Motor Company, had long been a strong supporter of the auto industry but also stressed environmental issues over the years.

"Rep. Dingell was a great friend for the truck and automotive aftermarket industries. In his role as Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, Dingell crafted the Petroleum Marketing Practices Act and the 1993 amendments to PMPA. He also worked with tire dealers to ensure passage of the voluntary tire registration system in 1982. He stood by dealers on almost every issue and the industry lost a true giant." -Roy Littlefield

Service Station Dealer Mel Sherbert worked closely with Rep. Dingell in the 1980s and 90s on a variety of service station related legislation. Mel remembers Dingell as being helpful and fair to both refiners and dealers. He remembers the Congressman always wanting to make a deal and work things out for both sides. Even when legislation did not go as planned, Dingell stayed honest and true to the dealers. Sherbert said, “Dingell was a great man and a great advocate for the industry, a true gentleman.”

He played a key role in helping pass signature pieces of legislation such as the Civil Rights Act, Medicare, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act and the Affordable Care Act, more commonly known as Obamacare.
If you don’t have the time to respond to online customer reviews, contact us about our Reputation Management service!

Reputation Management: Taking control of your customer reviews

By: Sam Chiarelli of Net Driven

Why Responding to Online Reviews is Important

Customer referrals and testimonials have always been important for driving businesses forward. Traditionally, much of the communication between existing and potential customers was conducted by word of mouth, away from public eyes. But in the past few years, social media has changed that.

Now, reviews of your business—both positive and negative—are visible to everyone. If you don’t have the time to interact with your customers on social media, they may feel that their concerns are not being heard. You risk losing the reviewer’s loyalty, but also the business of anyone who disapproves of your non-responsive attitude.

Your response to reviews is critical for your bottom line. A customer who has had a less-than-desirable experience can often be turned into a more committed customer if their concerns are addressed properly. Other customers can see this interaction play out in real time (and far into the future, as reviews remain visible indefinitely). When potential customers view your efforts to make things right, they are more likely to choose your business.

How to Respond to Online Reviews

If you receive a negative review, you may be tempted to fire a defensive response back quickly. Take a moment to collect yourself, and be sure to answer calmly and politely. No matter how you may feel privately, it’s important to remember this is a public exchange and you want to portray your business in the best way possible. To help you do so, here’s a step-by-step guide on how to write a response to a negative review:

1. Acknowledge the customer’s complaint and show them that the concerns raised have been heard.

2. Apologize for the service issue and explain how the situation will be handled by you and your staff. The way you handle the situation is up to you, but the way the customer’s experience is managed will affect others’ opinions of your business.

3. You can also ask for more information about the incident or schedule a meeting or phone call to discuss the matter further. Make sure someone speaks to the dissatisfied customer, hears his or her concerns, and apologizes directly.

4. Make it clear that this is not how you want to do business and that you will do everything possible to make sure this situation doesn’t happen again.

5. Make a gesture to rectify the situation—whether that’s assuming the cost of a repair, providing a free service in the future, or some other incentive to keep the person’s business and make amends for the previous issue.

Remember: the more heartfelt and earnest
Reputation Management: Taking control of your customer reviews

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your reply, the better the exchange will go. Responding to negative reviews can be a challenge, but doing so affects the perception of your business. Take control of the situation and you’ll be able to win some honor back, and propel your business to the next level.

Even positive reviews can be a springboard to cementing relationships. The following positive review was addressed by our Reputation Management team:

Great service, friendly staff. Was told by one business I needed a number of items and the gentleman here explained none of those items needed replaced. They have my business from now on.

We will be proud to be here for you from now on, Christine, and it was a pleasure to assist you on your most recent visit as well. Thank you for your fantastic feedback and perfect rating!

This 5-star review is visible to the customer’s friends and those who follow the business page. This positive interaction is an authentic interaction that operates like free advertising for the business.

What Your Business Can Do About Reviews On Social Media

So how can you ensure your online brand management is under control? Our Reputation Management service responds to your customer reviews on Facebook, Google My Business, and Yelp, while providing a personal touch on all these platforms.

We also notify you when new reviews are posted so you’ll know what your customers are saying about you and how we’ve responded to them.

With Reputation Management working alongside our Social Media Master Tech services, you’ll get maximum exposure for your online reviews and your social profiles--each supporting the other for a comprehensive social internet marketing package.
Letter to the Editor

Dear SSDA-AT,

As the world’s leading natural gas and oil producer, the United States is in a position of strength. Believers in our industry might not have been surprised that America could again be the leading producer of natural gas and oil. And maybe a few thought that we could also reduce carbon emissions faster than any other nation. But who ever imagined that we could achieve both? But that’s exactly what we’ve done, thanks to the women and men we call America’s Generation Energy – the industry workforce whose innovation and dedication is meeting record world energy demand while driving record environmental progress. We profiled several generation energy professionals in API’s latest State of American Energy report. Check out the report to learn about the chemical engineers, geophysicists, safety managers, cybersecurity architects, pipeline supervisors, and more, who are producing more energy, more safely and cleanly than ever. 2018 was a record year for U.S. energy. We produced natural gas and oil at record levels and reduced carbon emissions more than any other nation. With the right strategy – expansion of energy infrastructure, effective trade policy, and a smart regulatory framework that prioritizes innovation – we can keep America’s Generation Energy going strong, in 2019 and beyond.

Sincerely,

MIKE SOMMERS, President and CEO, API

Employers Need to Make Sure Handbook Policies are Compliant with Federal and State Law

A variety of changes in state law recently became effective. Have you addressed all of them? Numerous states have enacted laws relating to: paid and unpaid leave requirements, employee reimbursement, sexual harassment, use of biometric information, legalization of marijuana, bans on requesting applicants to provide compensation history or criminal history before a conditional job offer is made, etc. We recommend all employers have their Employee Handbook reviewed on an annual basis to ensure compliance with all federal and state requirements.
EPA says to Finish E15 Gasoline Rule Before Summer, Despite U.S. Shutdown

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said it will complete a proposal to expand sales of higher ethanol blends of gasoline in time for summer, despite delays from the partial government shutdown.

“I still think we can get the rule done in time and what I mean by that is get the rule in place by start of the summertime,” Bill Wehrum, the agency’s assistant administrator for air and radiation, told reporters at a public event in Washington, referring to the name for gasoline containing 15 percent ethanol.

President Donald Trump had promised U.S. farmers and biofuels producers that his administration would lift a long-time ban on summertime E15 sales to help boost demand for the corn-based fuel.

“That was our original goal. I think we can still meet that goal,” Wehrum said, referring to finalizing the rule before June to get it in place for summer driving season.

The partial government shutdown had raised concerns the effort might not be completed in time for this year’s summer driving season, which begins in June, because agency workers were furloughed.

EPA workers are expected back to work soon after an apparent deal reached on Friday to end the shutdown.

The ban had been imposed over concerns that E15 contributes to smog in hot weather, though research has since shown that the 15 percent blend of fuel may not increase smog relative to the more common 10 percent blends that are sold year-round.

E15 has been a hot-button issue between the oil and corn industries. Farmers and biofuel producers have been lobbying for an end to the E15 ban to bolster demand, but the oil industry has expressed opposition to any policy that would further raise ethanol’s share of the fuel market.
President Donald Trump called investment in infrastructure “a necessity,” but a detailed articulation of a vision for rebuilding the country’s crumbling roads and bridges was absent from a much-anticipated State of the Union address that focused primarily on security concerns and immigration policy.

During a lengthy speech Feb. 5 to a joint session of Congress on Capitol Hill, the president affirmed that Republicans, in control of the Senate, as well as Democrats who took over the House after the 2018 midterm elections, possess the political acuity to “unite for a great rebuilding of America’s crumbling infrastructure.” “I know that the Congress is eager to pass an infrastructure bill, and I am eager to work with you on legislation to deliver new and important infrastructure investment, including investments in the cutting-edge industries of the future,” Trump said. “This is not an option. This is a necessity.” The president, however, stopped short of signaling if or when his team would unveil a proposal that would address the repairs for such crumbling infrastructure, or the requisite cost for a nationwide rebuilding campaign. A White House note that expanded on Trump’s address indicated the president “urges Congress to pass a bill that delivers new and important infrastructure investment to rebuild our crumbling roads, aging bridges, crowded airports, and other infrastructure.” The note emphasized support for streamlining the permitting process and highlighted the country’s congestion crisis, but a sustainable funding mechanism for big-ticket projects was missing.

Heading into this year, the self-proclaimed “Builder-in-Chief” said infrastructure funding priorities would be made part of his agenda. Last year, transportation leaders on Capitol Hill had dismissed Trump’s 10-year, $1.5 trillion plan. Its significant reliance on non-federal funds proved difficult for authorizers to support. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, as expected, praised Trump.

“The president issued a bipartisan call to repair and restore America’s aging infrastructure,” said the secretary. “Over the last two years, due to the president’s policies, our economy has generated historic levels of economic and job growth for Americans and widespread private sector investment.” Trump’s vague messaging on infrastructure legislation notwithstanding, the desire in Congress to advance a comprehensive package remains alive. Senate transportation leaders recently expressed support for a fiscally responsible measure capable of advancing this year. In the House, Transportation panel Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) insists he’ll have legislation ready in a few months.

Reacting to the president’s address, DeFazio said: “Any serious infrastructure proposal must provide sustainable, long-term federal funding so we can

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Trump Calls Infrastructure Investment ‘A Necessity’

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make these necessary investments, create millions of living-wage American jobs, increase economic growth, and decrease congestion and emissions.”

His Republican partner on the panel, Missouri Rep. Sam Graves, welcomed Trump’s remarks. “With the president’s leadership on infrastructure, and the widespread agreement on the need to act, we have a prime opportunity to achieve something that matters to people across the country and to our economy,” Graves said. “It’s up to Congress to work together and with the administration to find common ground on issues that pose real threats to the future of our infrastructure network.”

Also missing from the president’s address were references about climate science and the recent partial shutdown of federal agencies at the start of the 116th Congress. In the Democratic response to the State of the Union, former Georgia gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams omitted references about infrastructure while focusing on policy initiatives not raised by Trump, insisting the shutdown was avoidable. “We can do so much more. Take action on climate change, defend individual liberties with fair-minded judges,” said Abrams. In recent years, transportation stakeholders representing the freight and commuter sectors have urged lawmakers to pass bills meant to repair and maintain the network of roads, bridges, railroads and ports around the country. Funding authority for highway projects expires in the fall of 2020, and revenue from federal fuel taxes is insufficient to sustain the Highway Trust Fund, the account used to assist states.

The American Society of Civil Engineers has repeatedly observed that the country’s infrastructure is in poor condition. Its most recent quadrennial report card, unveiled in 2017, issued an overall grade of “D+” to infrastructure. As the group’s president, Robin Kemper, noted after the State of the Union: “We have continued to underinvest for far too long, and an infrastructure bill is overdue.”

“America’s truckers, along with a broad coalition of the business community, have pledged our financial commitment to making this national priority a reality,” said American Trucking Associations President Chris Spear. “Decades of failed leadership in Washington have led us to this point, which is why we commend the president for seizing this opportunity to bring all sides together to forge a common path forward.”

American Road and Transportation Builders Association president Dave Bauer, whose group consistently calls for the adoption of a sustainable funding application for the Highway Trust Fund account, added, “The last two federal surface transportation investment laws were achieved during eras of divided government. This time should be no different.”
Republican Urges Trump to ‘Jump-Start’ Infrastructure Push

Democrats in Congress say they want to do it. President Donald Trump says he wants it, too.

But if a major transportation bill is going to happen this year, the ranking Republican on the House committee that would write it says Trump needs to get his own party on board.

Trump has talked about infrastructure since the 2016 campaign, and a year ago called on Congress in his first State of the Union speech “to produce a bill that generates at least $1.5 trillion for new infrastructure investment that our country so desperately needs.”

His administration followed up with a 2019 budget proposal that set aside $200 million that was intended to leverage another $1.3 trillion in investment from the private sector and state and local governments.

It also cut existing programs by 18 percent. An administration fact sheet said confusion about the “proper” role of the federal government produced an “unhealthy dynamic in which state and local governments delay projects in the hope of receiving federal funds.”

Trump’s plan to attract private and state investments was rejected by Republicans who controlled both chambers, and related spending bills — which still have not been finalized — largely ignored the proposed cuts.

Details optional

Graves said Trump does not have to give details, but he should talk about the importance of passing a package this year.

“It’s obviously not going to be the biggest part of his speech, but if he goes through how important it is to him to see something done, it’s going to get people talking,” Graves said.

He worries, he said, that the partial government shutdown will overshadow any policy in the speech, even if it goes on Tuesday as planned. But Jim Tymon, executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, said a bipartisan construction program is a good way to put the current partisan acrimony in the rear view mirror.

“Given how the last month and a half have gone, it’s a great opportunity for Congress to come together and show there are issues they can agree on,” Tymon said.

Dave Bauer, CEO of the American Road & Transportation Builders Association, said that given how much Trump has spoken in the past about an infrastructure program, if he doesn’t mention it, it will be seen by some in Washington and beyond as a sign the issue has slipped off the agenda.

But he said the blame for inaction on the issue last year is not all Trump’s.
Republican Urges Trump to ‘Jump-Start’ Infrastructure Push

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“Congress didn’t act,” he said. “Neither chamber produced an infrastructure package.”

After the November election, Trump indicated he was open to dealing with Democrats.

“The Democrats will come to us with a plan for infrastructure, a plan for health care, a plan for whatever they are looking at, and we’ll negotiate,” Trump said at the time.

Highway Trust Fund

A statement from Trump in the State of the Union could help Congress make tough decisions about how to shore up the Highway Trust Fund, which faces a growing shortfall between what is being spent and the revenue from the gas tax, last raised in 1993.

“It would be great to have him endorse a long-term funding solution for the Highway Trust Fund,” Tymon said. “It will give some of those conservative Republicans a little bit more leash to jump on the bandwagon.”

House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Peter A. DeFazio, D-Ore., agreed with Graves about the importance of Trump’s support, especially in the GOP-controlled Senate.

“Absent that, I think it will be very difficult to get the investment we need,” DeFazio said. “I would hope the president would be more specific. Let’s say he goes up to $2 trillion this year. How are we going to pay for it?”

Last year, DeFazio and then-Chairman Bill Shuster, R-Pa., said they hoped Trump would call for an increase in the federal gas tax. Shuster retired in January.

Sen. Thomas R. Carper, D-Del., the ranking member on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, said last March that Trump agreed in a closed-door meeting with lawmakers to support a gas tax increase.

But Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Chairman Roger Wicker, R-Miss., told Politico in November he’s waiting for an announcement and then, “I would listen to the president and consider his point of view.”

The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce called earlier this month for raising the gas tax by 5 cents a gallon every year for five years, which chamber vice president Ed Mortimer said would raise $394 billion over 10 years.

“From the chamber’s perspective, we have to get out of just fixing current potholes and get to investing in a 21st Century infrastructure,” Mortimer said.

“We believe there’s an opportunity there to work on a solution that helps all of America,” Mortimer said.
CBO: Debt Still on Unsustainable Path

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released its Budget and Economic Outlook for the next decade this morning, which warned that our debt is headed to uncharted waters.

Under current law, CBO projects debt will rise from 78 percent of the economy today to almost 93 percent by 2029 and over 152 percent within 30 years. Under CBO’s Alternative Fiscal Scenario, which assumes the continuation of current policies, debt would reach 105 percent of the economy by 2029 and exceed record levels set after World War II by 2030.

The following is a statement from Maya MacGuineas, president of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget:

You need to go no further than this report to see the real state of the union – our national debt is rising rapidly, and trillion-dollar deficits are just on the horizon. Numbers don’t lie, and anyone with a calculator on their phone can see that debt is a problem that can’t be ignored.

The debt doesn’t just burden future generations, it also stands in the way of economic and political progress today. With the government now reopened, it is time for the new Congress and the President to work to put the country on more solid fiscal ground.

CBO’s annual report is a reminder that the situation is getting worse, not better. Lawmakers need to stop the digging, but even that will keep debt growing. They should come up with a plan now while the economy is strong to put our debt on a downward path and phase it in to avoid the much more disruptive choices that procrastination will bring.
U.S. President Donald Trump is reviving efforts to win approval for a significant infrastructure plan lasting up to 13 years, two people briefed on the matter said, as the administration seeks to bring a long-stalled campaign promise back to life.

In a meeting of top advisers at the White House, the sources, who declined to be identified since the meeting was not public, said participants discussed aspects of a potential infrastructure plan and whether to include details of it in Trump’s State of the Union address scheduled for later this month. About 20 officials took part in the more than hour-long meeting with Trump, including Vice President Mike Pence, White House senior adviser Ivanka Trump, acting Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, the sources said.

They discussed how to incorporate into the plan funding for a next-generation wireless network, known as 5G, and potentially using the plan to modernize the U.S. air traffic control system, the people said. It followed a senior staff-level meeting on infrastructure earlier this month. A White House official confirmed the meeting took place but declined to comment further. The administration is considering a 13-year program but has not settled on key issues, including whether it will propose new ways to pay for increased spending. The 13-year time frame mirrors the longest-ever highway funding program. In 1956, Congress authorized $25 billion from the budget years 1957 through 1969. The current highway bill expires in September 2020 and could be a vehicle for new infrastructure spending. Officials may have another meeting on raising the subject in the State of the Union before a final decision. The White House may only insert a reference to Trump’s eagerness to work with Democrats to get a deal done. Trump has said on several occasions since he was elected in 2016 that he wants to reach across the aisle on the issue.

Democrats took control of the House of Representatives this month after November’s congressional elections. Republicans still control the Senate.

**BIPARTISAN SUPPORT**

While both parties support an infrastructure overhaul, a showdown looms over funding for the project.

Democrats insist any plan must include new revenue. Trump administration officials have been meeting with congressional Democrats in recent months to talk about highway funding and infrastructure issues.

The administration proposed a plan last year to use $200 billion in federal funds to try to stimulate $1.5 trillion in infrastructure improvements over 10 years, but would have cut an equivalent amount in projected infrastructure spending from the federal budget as it shifted more costs to states and cities. The plan was declared dead on arrival and never got a vote in Congress. The Trump administration has not decided how much, if any, of last year’s plan to include in its new proposal. Democratic U.S. Representative Peter DeFazio, who chairs the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, wants the White House to back significant additional federal funds to rebuild crumbling U.S. roads, bridges and airports.

“There has to be real money, real investment,” DeFazio said in November. “We’re not going to do pretend stuff like asset recycling. We’re not going to do massive privatization.”
SSDA-AT Involved in Estate Tax Legislation

SSDA-AT attended a Family Business Coalition meeting to discuss the prospects of Estate Tax repeal in the 116th Congress. SSDA-AT is currently supporting the efforts in Washington to repeal the Estate Tax. We are lobbying for co-sponsors on the Death Tax Repeal Act. Recently, Senator Sanders introduced a bill that SSDA-AT is strongly opposing that would raise the Estate Tax to unreasonable levels.

The administration is supporting efforts to repeal the Estate Tax and at the meeting we met with Paul Teller, Special Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs.

Below is a comparison of the introduced Estate Tax bill so far in the 116th Congress:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Exemption</th>
<th>Base tax rate</th>
<th>Additional tax rates</th>
<th>Top Tax Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death Tax Repeal Act:</td>
<td>Congressman Jason Smith</td>
<td>Repeal</td>
<td>Repeal</td>
<td>Lower gift tax rate to 35%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>H.R. 218</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death Tax Repeal Act:</td>
<td>Senator John Thune</td>
<td>Repeal</td>
<td>Repeal</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>S. 215</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Estate Tax Rate Reduction Act:</td>
<td>Senator Tom Cotton</td>
<td>$11 million</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>S. 176</td>
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<tr>
<td>For the 99.8% Act:</td>
<td>Senator Bernie Sanders</td>
<td>$3.5 million</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>50% over $10 million</td>
<td>77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>S. 309</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55% over $50 million</td>
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<td>77% over $1 billion</td>
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</table>

Other details

Death Tax Repeal Act:
- Maintains step-up basis.

Estate Tax Rate Reduction Act:
- Maintains step-up basis.

For the 99.8% Act:
- Hikes gift and generation skipping tax rate to 45% and lowers gift tax and generation skipping tax exemption to $1 million, not indexed for inflation.
- Lowers annual gift limit to $10,000.
- Weaken Grantor Retained Annuity Trusts by increasing minimum holding time from 2 to 10 years.
- Requires consistent basis reporting requirements (This was already passed into law).

Ends valuation discounts on nonbusiness assets.
- Maintains step-up basis.

- Increases conservation easements limit to $2 million and allow farmers to lower farmland values by up to $3 million.
SSDA-AT: Organizing & Executing the Next White House Conference on Small Business (WHCSB)

SSDA-AT has renewed efforts to form the White House Conference on Small Business.

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:
In the 116th Congress, we urge Representatives to introduce an updated version of H.R. 6446, the "White House Conference on Small Business Act of 2018," from the 115th Congress. We urge Senators to introduce companion legislation authorizing a White House Conference on Small Business (WHCSB).

This 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.
**List of Regulation Rollbacks for Oil, Gas and Coal Industry**

Under President Donald Trump, federal agencies have moved to roll back regulations for companies that extract, transport and burn oil, gas and coal. Government analyses show companies will save billions of dollars in compliance costs, but the trade-off often will be adverse impacts to public health and the environment.

The rule changes:

**FUEL TRAIN BRAKES:** Citing high costs, Trump’s administration rescinded a 2015 Department of Transportation rule requiring railroads to begin installing more advanced electronic brakes on trains hauling hazardous fuels.

*Industry savings: $375 million-$554 million (2018-2037)*

*Impact:* Additional derailments of tank cars. AP found the government understated potential impacts by as much as $117 million.

*Status:* Final

**METHANE EMISSIONS:** Administration wants to eliminate 2016 Environmental Protection Agency rule requiring energy companies to reduce flaring of methane, a potent greenhouse gas.


*Impacts:* Emission increases of 380,000 tons of methane, 100,000 tons of volatile organic compounds, 3,800 tons of hazardous air pollutants; adverse health effects including premature deaths, heart attacks, and respiratory problems; potential reductions in visibility.

*Status:* Pending

**METHANE EMISSIONS:** Administration largely eliminated Interior Department’s 2016 “waste prevention rule” that required companies to reduce the flaring of methane on public and tribal lands.

*Industry savings: $1.4 billion-$2.1 billion (2019-2028)*

*Impacts:* Emission increases of 1.8 million tons of greenhouse gas methane; 800,000 tons of volatile organic compounds that can harm health; unspecified public health and welfare impacts.

*Status:* Final

**CLEAN POWER PLAN:** Administration is proposing replacement of EPA’s 2015 rule that aimed to cut U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by focusing on carbon dioxide from coal-fired power plants. The changes are projected to increase annual coal production by 33 million-40 million tons by 2030.

*Industry savings: $3.7 billion-$6.4 billion (2023-2037)*

*Impacts:* Emissions increases of up to 61 million tons of carbon dioxide, 52,000 tons of sulfur oxides and 39,000 tons of nitrous oxides annually by 2030; health effects including up to 1,400 premature deaths, 750 non-fatal heart attacks in 2030; reductions in visibility; ecosystem effects.

*Status:* Pending

**COAL ASH DISPOSAL:** Administration removed many mandates from 2015 EPA rule aimed at preventing hundreds of spills from toxic coal ash dumps over the next century.

*Industry savings: $397 million-$605 million (100 years)*

*Impact:* EPA says that, with other existing federal and state regulations, there will be no additional risks to human health and environment. Critics disagree.

*Status:* Final
List of Regulation Rollbacks for Oil, Gas and Coal Industry

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FRACKING: Administration rescinded 2015 Interior Department rule that lowered the risk of water contamination from an oil and gas drilling technique called hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking.”

Industry savings: $102 million-$339 million (2018-2027)

Impact: Increased risk to surface waters, groundwater supplies.

Status: Final

OFFSHORE DRILLING-SAFETY: Administration dropped requirements for third-party safety equipment inspections from a rule enacted after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Industry savings: $92 million-$131 million (2019-2028)

Impacts: Administration says the changes will have a negligible impact on safety and environmental protection; critics say it raises the risk of accidents.

Status: Final

OFFSHORE DRILLING-BLOWOUTS: Administration wants more flexibility in how companies meet safety and equipment standards in 2016 Interior rule requiring more stringent inspections of devices designed to prevent offshore oil spills.

Industry savings: $693 million-$946 million (2018-2027)

Impacts: Administration says the changes will not impact worker safety and environmental protection; critics say it raises the risk of accidents.

Status: Pending

REFINERY SECTOR: At request of oil industry, administration gave companies more flexibility in reporting air pollution releases under 2015 EPA rule restricting toxic air pollution from refineries.

Industry savings: $89 million-$110 million (2019-2026)

Impacts: Administration says no appreciable emission increases expected; critics say companies can now delay reports of toxic chemical releases into the air, putting communities at risk.

Status: Final

MERCURY POLLUTION: Administration wants to eliminate 2016 EPA rule that determined it was “appropriate and necessary” to reduce power plant emissions of mercury. It says EPA should not have considered up to $90 billion in secondary benefits in reaching its decision.

Industry savings: uncertain; utilities have spent estimated $18 billion to date on compliance

Impacts: Uncertain.

Status: Pending

VEHICLE FUEL EFFICIENCY: To limit a 2016 Department of Transportation proposal that called for more stringent fuel efficiency standards, the administration seeks to freeze them after 2020.

Industry savings: revenues on up to 79 billion gallons of additional fuel sales (for vehicles built through 2029)

Impacts: Emission increases of 961 million tons of carbon dioxide, 1.7 million tons of methane; administration says its proposal would prevent up to 1,000 highway deaths annually, a finding disputed by former EPA officials and outside experts.

Status: Pending

NOTE: All weights are in short tons, not metric tons
DOL Sends Proposed Overtime Rule to the White House — Release of Proposed Rule Still Expected in March 2019

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has sent its draft of the long-awaited Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) on the “white collar” overtime exemptions to the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review.

OMB review is the final step before publication of the proposed rule in the Federal Register. The OMB's review of the draft proposed rule could take several months.

We will not know details of the proposal until after OMB approves it for publication in the Federal Register, which is now likely to happen in March 2019.

We expect the DOL to set a salary level in the low- to mid-$30,000s.

$21.5 Million Verdict Because Employer Failed to Accommodate Employee Religious Belief

Title VII requires employers to provide a reasonable accommodation for religious beliefs unless unduly burdensome. A long-term employee at a hotel in Florida informed the hotel at her hiring that she could not work on Sundays because she was a missionary for the Soldiers of Christ Church.

After such, the employee was permitted for almost 10 years to take Sundays off. However, employee was told by a new manager that she was required to work on Sundays. The employee gave the manager a letter from her pastor explaining her sincerely held religious beliefs. The employee even switched shifts with co-workers for a while until she was allegedly “terminated for alleged misconduct, negligence, and ‘unexcused absences.’”

The jury awarded the employee a total of $21.5 million: $36,000 for lost wages and benefits, $500,000 for emotional pain and mental anguish, and $21 million for punitive damages.
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