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The Biggest Problem Facing Small Business: Healthcare

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While the new presidential administration and Congress grapple with how to pull the American economy out of its rut, 27 million small businesses across the country are doing the same. Just keeping their doors open is a challenge for too many small business owners. And of all the problems they're facing right now, healthcare is at the top of the list.

The healthcare crisis is crushing the backbone of the U.S. economy—small business. Small businesses create 75% of all net new jobs and employ more than half of the private sector workforce in America. Now more than ever, small business owners face a number of healthcare challenges.

Skyrocketing premiums are forcing them to cut benefits, lay off employees, or postpone expansion. Many who are keeping their heads above water are having trouble hiring in this competitive landscape because they can't offer healthcare benefits. Entrepreneurs with pre-existing conditions can't start new businesses and create new jobs because they're denied coverage. At Small Business Majority, we hear these kinds of stories from small business owners all the time, all over the country.

87% of small business owners in our national study cited healthcare as their number one concern. For example, our research shows that 76% of California small business owners provide healthcare benefits so that they can hire outstanding employees. If they can't afford to offer healthcare coverage, the whole economy suffers.

Right now, the County Public Health Department and local chambers of commerce in Yolo County are conducting a survey of small business owners to learn more about employers' attitudes toward healthcare reform and their efforts to cover their employees. The survey is being done in partnership with The Access Project, a national leader in the area of healthcare access.

If you're a small business owner with 50 or fewer employees in any of these counties, I strongly urge you to participate in this survey. You can take it online at www.bizhealthcare.org.

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