



AMERICAN  
SUSTAINABLE  
BUSINESS  
COUNCIL

Advancing the Power of Business  
for a Just and Sustainable World

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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## Looking back together on a year of extreme challenges...

The COVID-19 crisis, together with outrage about persistent racism and the appalling attempted takeover of our Capitol, has revealed what many of us have always known: our current system of capitalism does not work for most Americans. This dysfunction was recognized in a May 2020 JUST Capital/Harris Poll that found 75% of Americans believe our current form of capitalism doesn't ensure the greater good of society, and only 29% believe it produces the kind of society they want for the next generation or believes it works for the average American.

As Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Steven Pearlstein wrote, "our economic system has run off the moral rails, offending our sense of fairness, eroding our sense of community, poisoning our politics and rewarding values that easily degenerate into greed and indifference."

**The disconnection between work and reward, Main Street and Wall Street, has real consequences in a consumer-driven economy and in a democratic society; especially one that has yet to resolve the schism between its founding assertion of equality and its de facto caste system based on race. Add a catastrophic, mismanaged health crisis, a broken health care delivery system and a deliberately inadequate safety net, and "devastation" hardly covers it.**

This situation did not happen by accident. Today's challenges are not the result of a "free" market but of policies that have been designed into our system of governance over the past 40+ years. These policies have covertly discouraged innovation, cooperation, opportunity and a level playing field. They've also incentivized externalizing business costs onto society while sequestering profits for an ever-smaller group of beneficiaries. That's no way to build sustainable success for a company or a country.

**People, planet and prosperity must all be cultivated for a resilient society in a free country. But that means our nation must stop rewarding the zero-sum, dog-eat-dog, winner-take-all approach.**

Just as business draws benefit from all its stakeholders -- customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and the environment life depends on, as well as shareholders -- it must, in turn, benefit them. What's more, to earn credibility, "stakeholder" business must be driven by transparent goals and metrics. To move this business model into the mainstream, we propose specific public policy changes outlined in ASBC's comprehensive new report, *Creating an Economic System that Works for All*. Each policy we recommend is essential to the business community; has business as a key stakeholder in its implementation; addresses the social, economic, and environmental aspects of sustainability; closes an inequality gap; and represents an "acupuncture" point in making our economic system work for all. These enlightened policies work together to change the system as a whole. We think you'll find it encouraging!

Please see details of our other achievements in this 2020 Annual Report. Then, visit ASBC's website for our latest groundbreaking reports and opportunities to join us in action. Let them give you a rare and precious commodity in 2021: real hope, based on sound reason and good will. And let's get big things done, together.

**Stay well, safe and strong. You're needed!**

With gratitude,

Jeffrey Hollender, Cofounder/CEO/Board Chair, ASBC  
David Levine, Cofounder/President, ASBC  
MaryAnne Howland, Chair, ASBI Board



## Protecting & Promoting America's Best Values

ASBC began 2020 focused on our most important and viable public policy campaigns, but before the first quarter ended, we were also busy helping our members and allies cope with fall-out from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Trump Administration's willfully inadequate response to the pandemic's interrelated health and economic disasters -- compounded by an intentionally inadequate social safety net -- painfully revealed the need for big solutions. By early December, Yelp's Economic Impact Report found that 97,966 U.S. businesses had closed permanently. ASBC tirelessly reminded government leadership of its vital duty to "promote the general welfare" and deploy the resources we taxpayer-stakeholders have provided to speed recovery for all.

Despite the challenges posed by a White House and Senate leadership determined to turn back the clock, ASBC's game-changing accomplishments in 2020 are seeded throughout our struggling economy.

All year, ASBC mobilized supporters and advocated with policymakers for recovery-related legislation to help businesses and employees survive. While most of the legislation we supported passed the House but was blocked from Senate consideration, ASBC led nearly 60 organizations to help lower-level government units with our concrete action plan, State and Local Government Recommendations for Reopening the Economy.

**We also helped to block harmful Trump Administration initiatives.** When it severely cut U.S. Postal Service functions despite a greatly increased, pandemic-triggered need, ASBC mobilized businesses and, along with seniors, veterans, and others, forced a partial roll-back of crippling policies. When Trump's Labor Department tried to limit the ability of federal pension funds to factor Environmental, Social & Governmental (ESG) values into investments, ASBC mobilized more than 400 business leaders and investors in opposition that successfully saw the proposed limit withdrawn.

In the wake of police murders of black citizens including George Floyd and Breanna Taylor, ASBC and our revitalized Race & Equity Working Group mobilized business leaders to curb police immunity and support equal justice. To support demand for more healthful, sustainably produced food, ASBC engaged farming and other food businesses with working group Regenerative Agriculture & Justice and supported Sen. Gillibrand's Small Farmers Relief Act. ASBC Executive Vice President Thomas Oppel, who serves on the national steering committee of the Paid Leave for All Coalition, articulated ASBC's demand for paid leave in federal pandemic relief and helped our team build state-level paid leave movements.

A beacon in this stormy year was ASBC's new benchmark report, *Creating an Economy that Works for All*, a comprehensive examination of our country's interconnected challenges, together with actionable recommendations for progress. Another was the report, *Childhood Cancer: Cross-sector Strategies for Prevention*, developed by dozens of scientific and advocacy groups led by ASBC President Levine, documenting connections between the incidence of pediatric cancer and environmental factors we can control.

ASBC also reinforced our strength in work with state affiliates and helped build new organizations that expanded our geographic reach. While much federal-level progress was stalled, our nimble, determined state affiliates secured numerous legislative victories on safer chemicals, clean energy and more.



We also expanded our reach and amplified our voice at the national and international levels. ASBC formed a strategic alliance with Social Venture Circle (SVC) which connects entrepreneurs, investors, and corporate leaders with funding and capabilities to create businesses that contribute to a regenerative economic system. Existing ASBC and SVC memberships are being converted to a new, combined membership with added benefits. (See [jointhenexteconomy.org](http://jointhenexteconomy.org).) This alliance more than doubled our business membership, dramatically increasing our power and influence. We also allied with the European Sustainable Business Federation ([ecopreneur.eu](http://ecopreneur.eu)), representing 3,000 businesses in the European Union. With this alliance, ASBC can expand collaborative initiatives and campaigns between the EU and the U.S. and help accelerate our transition to a sustainable economy.



Sharing support despite the pandemic, ASBC engaged tens of thousands of business leaders with numerous virtual events. We hosted an eye-opening webinar, Revolutionary Accounting, with Harvard Business School's George Serafeim, bringing the transformational concept of full-cost accounting to balance sheets and profit-&-loss statements. With the American Independent Business Alliance (AMIBA), we co-sponsored a virtual conference that shared game-changing strategies to grow inclusive local economies; an ongoing need that has become even more acute in the pandemic. With SVC, we cohosted a virtual conference, "Remaking & Revitalizing the Economy," featuring thought leaders including Anand Giridharadas and Rebecca Henderson. We were also proud that the podcast series, What's America's Purpose? starred ASBC Co-founder and President David Levine on "Can American Business Help Lead the Way to a Sustainable Future?" For us, the answer is always "yes."



Since the November election, ASBC has engaged with and provided recommendations to the Biden-Harris Agency Review Team for the Small Business Administration, Dept. of Agriculture, Dept. of Labor and Dept. of the Interior. We have also developed and submitted recommendations on climate and energy, and the circular economy. We invite you to access our recommendations.

Whatever the obstacles, ASBC will continue to speak up loudly and clearly for America's responsible business community, pushing for both the immediate goal of full recovery and the ongoing goal of a resilient national economy that works for all.





## Business and the Covid-19 Recovery

ASBC has always advanced public policies to incentivize a resilient, sustainable kind of capitalism – one that works for all. The urgent need for this version really hit home in the pandemic. The sudden crippling of our consumer-based economy and social systems along with public health forced a reluctant, widespread reckoning with all aspects of the status quo. ASBC’s efforts to help and advocate for our members and the larger responsible business community, especially small and medium-sized firms, began in mid-March and intensified throughout 2020.

When the pandemic hit and the CARES Act was passed, ASBC began delivering recovery-related information to businesses through e-blasts, webinars, and our website. We also were asked to carry the message in media. For example, How the business loan program would work in the \$2T coronavirus package, an article in The Hill, quoted ASBC President David Levine about the third relief package.

When relief roll-out problems left many businesses without available funding before the relief period expired, we worked with American Economic Liberties Project to conduct a Small Business Survey to learn the pandemic’s impact on our members and their priorities for relief. With allies including American Independent Business Alliance (AMIBA), we created Save Our Economy, a campaign outlining seven separate Congressional actions beyond the March CARES Act to help small businesses and their employees survive the pandemic. We also endorsed the Rebuilding Main Street Act that would let employers share payroll costs with the federal government and receive grants to help cover other fixed costs for safe reopening. We then mobilized businesses to sign our letter to lawmakers, endorsing this plan and urging more support for struggling small farmers. Our efforts engaged thousands of business leaders with a convenient, credible way to explain, directly to their elected officials, what pandemic relief they need and expect.

With the pandemic making the case for paid leave even more brutally obvious, ASBC continued our years of advocacy for High-Road Workplace practices, including paid leave, by supporting the Providing Americans Insured Days of Leave Act. Introduced in late March, this bill sought to extend and make permanent the sick leave and family leave provisions in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. When the stimulus bill that was finally signed on December 27 as part of a must-pass general funding bill did not extend paid leave, ASBC issued a statement demanding more responsible decision-making. With allies including American Independent Business Association (AMIBA), ASBC is vigorously pursuing the inclusion of paid leave in further recovery bills under the new administration.





Throughout 2020, ASBC actively monitored legislation and allocation of direct pandemic relief. Time and again, we mobilized members to Tell Congress to Save Our Economy Now. We also provided guidance and support at other levels: In July, addressing the continued lack of federal guidance (let alone resources) for state and local governments, ASBC worked with allies and experts to produce the comprehensive report, Recommendations for State and Local Governments on Re-opening the Economy. These recommendations provided both near-term economic stimulus and lasting social and environmental benefit.



Along with our day-to-day emergency response efforts, ASBC conducted virtual events that placed appropriate pandemic response in the heart of broader systemic improvement. In August, “Launch & Briefing: Businesses for a Climate-Smart Recovery” opened with an address by business leader and climate activist Tom Steyer, a former primary candidate for the presidency. In “Covid-19 & Sustainability: Why Take a Systems Approach?,” ASBC’s Jeffrey Hollender and American University’s Victoria Kiechel explored how COVID-19, climate change and economics are interrelated, their cumulative impact on small businesses and vulnerable communities, and how policymakers using “systems thinking” can deliver better outcomes.

**“The interdependency of consumers, businesses and their governing bodies at all levels has been made devastatingly clear, not by ideology but by real-world outcomes,” observed ASBC**

Executive Vice President and former Obama Administration official Thomas Oppel

“Enormous catastrophes may happen, but where countries have instituted ongoing high-road business practices, a reasonable social safety net, and a fully functional, good-faith, coordinated government, the ROI is millions of lives and billions of dollars saved. ASBC is more committed than ever to initiatives that strengthen our shared resiliency.”





## Advancing the High Road Economy

High-road businesses believe in full “stakeholder” capitalism rather than the narrow, “shareholders-only” view that fails to account for external impacts. In adopting high-road principles, companies affirm that their employees, the communities in which they operate and the products and services they provide are as integral to their success as the income on their P&L statements. High-road company leaders, many of them ASBC members, view the workplace as a means to create significant business and social value. They reject low-road business models that exploit employees to achieve short-term profit and increased share price. Years before The Business Roundtable and other prominent corporations considered the high-road approach, ASBC’s campaigns and our comprehensive report, *Building the High Road*, offered a high-road workplace framework, key metrics and examples from successful member firms of all sizes. To make the high road the only road, however, requires public policy that does not put high-road values at a competitive disadvantage.

In 2020, ASBC and our members continued to make an eloquent case -- from a business perspective -- for better policy. In January, Rebecca Hamilton, co-CEO of ASBC-member W.S. Badger Company, testified in support of the FAMILY Act (H.R. 1185) before the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee. In February, we took part in hearings held by the House Committee on Oversight and Reform on “A Threat to America’s Children.” To assess the impact of the Trump Administration’s proposed policy changes, hearings were divided into four parts; poverty, housing, hunger, and healthcare. At these hearings, ASBC voiced our concern that Trump’s proposed changes would weaken the safety net, especially for children.

Legislators are used to corporate lobbyists’ lament that fair wages, paid leave and other essential benefits would damage client firms. ASBC members’ testimony, sign-on letters and other statements provide a vitally different view of “what business wants.” Our message stood out as we made the business case for the safety net, including its impact on our consumer-dependent economy, the next generation of employees, and opportunity itself.

Our campaign, Capitalism for All, promotes the important shift from an exclusive focus on shareholders to a broader consideration of stakeholders. Unique among leading business groups, ASBC advocates for a stakeholder economy driven by transparency and measurable goals, so our campaign also offers public policies that redefine success metrics and fiduciary duties to incentivize sustainable, high-road business practices. Our working group, Creating an Economy that Works for All, keeps the mission front and center.

A big hurdle to capitalism that works for all is the calamitous erosion of wages against real costs over the past 40-plus years. Businesses know they don’t need tax breaks as much as they need customers with disposable dollars, and the federal minimum wage, unraised for over a decade, has proven the abject failure of “trickle down” prosperity. ASBC, in concert with Business for a Fair Minimum Wage, continues pushing for the \$15 hourly minimum to revitalize our economy and keep high-road firms competitive.



The pandemic drew public attention to another big, longstanding hurdle: millions of essential workers trying to cope without paid leave. Suddenly, the destructive impact on families, companies and customers when sick workers can't afford to stay home was felt nationwide, giving new impetus to ASBC's ongoing effort to pass the Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act and state bills to help employers struggling with the high cost of turnover and lost productivity.

The pandemic also brought home our shared danger from the nation's inadequate health care delivery system. ASBC and our allies repeatedly remind decision-makers that the U.S. needs Medicare for All to improve on our profit-based healthcare delivery system, end de facto rationing, and raise our health care access to basic developed-world standards. ASBC will persist in advocating for universal healthcare as essential to a more resilient, reliably vigorous U.S. economy.



One path ASBC sees to increasing high-road workplaces includes robust support for employee ownership. A stake in the business translates into a stake in the system, improved family prosperity, community stability and other priceless benefits that resonate through society and across generations. For example, Main Street businesses often close as their Boomer-owners retire, leaving loyal workers unemployed and customers bereft, but there's a win-win solution: Worker Ownership. ASBC, along with 1worker1vote and other members, advocated for public policies that incentivize worker cooperatives, responsible Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOP), transition-training programs and other means to increase worker ownership and help it succeed. We also provided useful recommendations to legislators with written and live testimony in hearings and in meetings with individual elected officials.

At the House Small Business Committee's request, ASBC provided written testimony supporting enhanced and expanded employee ownership opportunities after the public hearing on February 12. John Abrams, founder of ASBC-member South Mountain Company – a successful, 33-year worker cooperative -- was among owners testifying. That week, Bill Parks, president of ASBC-member firm NRS and ASBC staff met with more than two dozen Senate offices. There, we advocated for passing S.177, the Promotion and Expansion of Private Employee Ownership Act of 2019, and suggested amendments to increase incentives for creating Employee Stock Ownership Programs (ESOP).

Facilitating worker ownership is one of several priorities ASBC has discussed with the Biden-Harris Agency Review Team supporting the Department of Labor. We also discussed the ongoing fight for federal paid family leave, universal broadband access, raising the minimum wage, facilitating worker ownership and addressing race and equity. We heard from a wide range of experts in our community – Michael Peck (1worker1vote.org), April de Simone (Designing the WE), Joy Sterling (Iron Horse Vineyards), Joe Kenner (Greyston Bakery), Joe Sanberg (Aspiration Bank) and Denise Bowyer (American Income Life).

ASBC also keeps pushing against another big obstacle to the high road: our tax system that gives an unfair financial advantage to low-road companies and hampers essential public projects. We make the business case for a tax system that is equitable, not the current one that favors large, multinational corporations over small and mid-size domestic companies and the very wealthy over everyone else. We continue to speak for our members against big tax breaks, numerous tax shelters, unaccountable corporate handouts and other deals that have NOT produced the touted good jobs but only raise the national debt while impeding infrastructure, education, health care and other American priorities.

Bottom-line: ASBC's reasoned, dedicated objections force a second look at the conventional view of "what's good for business."





## Moving to a Circular Economy

Earth's environment itself is a closed, circular system, but since the Industrial Age, humans have acted otherwise. **Business has the definitive power to impede or facilitate a circular economy.** That is, one that reduces, reuses, shares, repairs, refurbishes and recycles to create a closed-loop system, minimizing resource inputs and emissions of carbon, waste and other pollutants. Many ASBC members already require circular methods in their facilities and even in their supply chains. The entire U.S. system must follow suit to achieve results at scale. To advance this objective, ASBC is focused on two areas where business has a defining role: safer chemicals and sustainable packaging.

### Safer Chemicals

With myriad experts, including ASBC-member manufacturers, retailers and other NGOs, we have made real progress in changing laws that govern how chemicals in commerce are used, tested disclosed, regulated and incentivized. One major ASBC 2020 effort dramatized the high stakes. Led by ASBC Co-founder & President David Levine, ASBC coordinated development of the Childhood Cancer Prevention Initiative, a collaboration of responsible businesses, scientists, health professionals, parents and policy experts. Cancer is the leading cause of death by disease for children in the U.S.; since 1975, the incidence of childhood cancers has increased by 34%. Treating this dreaded disease costs an estimated \$1.9 billion a year, and the cost in family wellbeing is even greater. But prevention is possible.

In September, the Childhood Cancer Prevention Initiative began raising awareness with its groundbreaking report, *Childhood Cancer: Cross-Sector Strategies for Prevention*. It shares evidence of how toxic chemicals in common use endanger children and how we can prevent much childhood cancer by removing toxic chemicals from children's products and environments where they live, learn and play. It details the state of childhood cancer in the U.S., offers mitigating strategies, and makes the business case for reducing environmental causes now.

"To defeat childhood cancer, we can and must end the production and use of toxic chemicals," asserted ASBC Co-founder & President David Levine. "Some businesses have a role in cancer causation, and all businesses can play a powerful role in accelerating our transition to safer chemicals and products free of toxic chemicals." ASBC mobilized businesses and the public to sign on to support this goal at <https://www.asbcouncil.org/childhood-cancer-prevention-business-sign>. The comprehensive report is available at <https://www.asbcouncil.org/childhood-cancer-prevention>.

In the Trump era, even existing protective regulations were imperiled, some from within their guardian agencies. But ASBC continued to speak for sustainable business that welcomes sensible regulations, fairly applied.

ASBC also called out public policy that lets some firms use technicalities to evade responsibility or absorb fines for wrongdoing as business costs. In March, a Chemical and Engineering News article, Chemical industry welcomes leniency from US EPA during coronavirus response, prominently quoted ASBC Executive VP Thomas Oppel: “This EPA decision exploits a public health crisis to further advance a dangerous political agenda that is stripping away the very environmental protections that science suggests are needed to combat climate change which may have a role in generating future pandemics.”

Despite daunting opposition, ASBC educated and mobilized our members and aided allies in key campaigns to thwart harmful public policies and advance safer chemicals policies. These included Ingredients Exposure and Preserve Safer Choice Program. We also continued building the What’s It Made Of? initiative with ASBC-member American Sustainable Furnishings Council (ASFC) and others. At the state level, we successfully helped pass an array of safer chemicals laws in bellwether California.

ASBC is especially proud of our support for an important win at the federal level: the Sustainable Chemistry Research and Development Act of 2019, which passed the Senate on Dec. 11, 2020 as part of the fiscal 2021 National Defense Authorization Act. It will emphasize American jobs and manufacturing while protecting human health and the environment by helping to realize the full innovation and market potential of sustainable chemistry technologies.

On behalf of military personnel and families, we achieved a partial victory on measures focused on PFAS impacts at hundreds of U.S. bases. PFAS chemicals, linked to various health problems and contaminating the drinking water of up to 110 million Americans, was the subject of House-passed H.R. 535, a bill we mobilized businesses to urge the Senate to consider.

ASBC will continue to support incentivizing production of green and renewable chemicals. Already sought by U.S. and European consumers, safer chemicals will drive innovation, boost U.S. market share, create good jobs and make workplaces and communities safer.



### **Sustainable Packaging**

Most products are brought to market in packaging that is excessive, environmentally unsustainable or both. Packaging waste, much of it U.S.-generated, causes enormous environmental damage domestically and globally, and effective disposal solutions are not widely implemented. Like safer chemicals, sustainable packaging is well within the U.S. business community’s capacity to provide, but strong legislation is needed for the majority to conform to best practices.

Throughout 2020, ASBC informed and mobilized members and allies to support sustainable packaging legislation. In February, ASBC released a statement endorsing the Lowenthal/Udall Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act, The proposed Federal legislation would phase out unnecessary single-use plastic products, hold corporations accountable for wasteful products, reduce wasteful packaging, and reform our broken waste and recycling collection system. We also supported the California Circular Economy and Plastic Pollution Reduction Act and other state efforts.

Using safer chemicals and sustainable packaging are two high-impact improvements in the hands of business today. ASBC will keep urging legislative support for these vital innovations.





## Preserving Climate, Updating Energy

As with safer chemicals and sustainable packaging, business has an outsized role for good or ill in the climate and energy arenas. Climate events are indisputably more frequent, severe and destructive to our businesses as well as our communities. Yet too many policymakers still refuse efforts to mitigate and reverse these effects, sometimes claiming that to address (or in some cases, even acknowledge) man-made climate change would hamper businesses and the economy. The opposite is true, and ASBC took every opportunity in 2020 to make the business case for climate change remediation.

In 2020, ASBC continued to push carbon pricing, an initiative with rare bipartisan support. To slow climate change, reducing emissions via carbon taxes makes good business sense, but fossil-fuel opposition is formidable. Washington State referendum 1631 was expected to win, and ASBC did our part to quickly mobilize business support, but the fossil fuel industry's overwhelming spend defeated the measure. To help offset that industry's massive influence, ASBC produced several videos with Business Climate Leaders and continued educating many more policymakers and business leaders on the viability of carbon pricing.

In January, ASBC mobilized business members with a sign-on letter and social media campaign opposing White House attempts to cripple the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Trump Administration's proposed weaker rules sought to eliminate the requirement for federal agencies to consider climate change impacts in reviewing federally permitted projects, increasing the risk of oil spills and other environmental disasters that spoil our waterways and ecosystems.

During the 2020 presidential election season, ASBC leveraged increased public attention on the parties' ideas about climate change and jobs. In August, ASBC hosted prominent business leader/philanthropist/activist Tom Steyer, a primaries presidential candidate, as he presented VP Joe Biden's Climate Plan (check out the recording). Steyer was joined by company leaders who offered their input on the role and responsibility of business in addressing climate change.

Discussing the cost feasibility of an ambitious climate plan, ASBC Co-founder/CEO Jeffrey Hollender put it succinctly: "Climate change is an economic issue. There are no jobs on a dead planet."

Throughout 2020, efforts of ASBC and our allies attracted increasing numbers of businesses in many sectors, including fisheries, breweries, outdoor recreation, restaurants and other tourist-dependent businesses; and manufacturers as well as Main Street retailers suffering supply chain and operating disruptions. Their support and testimony as ASBC members is a vital counterweight to the enormous lobbying prowess of fossil fuel, toxic chemical, and other climate-harming industries.

With climate change a global crisis, ASBC also expanded our relationship with like-minded organizations internationally. In April, ASBC announced its partnership with Ecopreneur.eu, the European Sustainable Business Federation, representing 3,000 firms in the EU. The alliance allows ASBC to expand our endeavors of collaboration, joint initiatives and campaigns between the European Union and the U.S. and help accelerate our transition to a sustainable economy.

The strong relationships we forged with youth leaders led to our collaboration with Business for the Global Climate Strike, and in September, ASBC again mobilized members to participate. We compiled resources and encouraged business leaders to sign on and share their actions supporting the Climate Strike. And well before the November election, we also rekindled business support for our nation’s rejoining of the Paris Climate Accord with the “We Are Still In” campaign.

ASBC has been working to have investors and insurers to divest from fossil fuels, and saw several important bellwether wins in 2020. On September 17, nearly 60 businesses urged U.S. insurance companies to drop their investments in fossil fuels to avoid worsening the impacts of global climate change. These businesses included Ben & Jerry’s, Aspen Skiing Co., Patagonia and Bigelow Tea. The S&P Global Market Intelligence article on the news quoted ASBC’s EVP Thomas Oppel: “When you’re trying to put out fires, you don’t invest in lighter fluid, but that’s exactly what insurance companies investing in fossil fuels are doing.”

On Dec. 9, ASBC and our fellow members of the DivestNY coalition celebrated a long-sought victory: After years of our consistent campaigning, New York State announced it would begin divesting its \$226 billion pension fund – the world’s largest – from fossil fuels in the next four years.

**“We are delighted to know that NY State will start divestiture from the most concerning oil and gas companies near-term and will decarbonize the entire fund by 2040, and we’re proud to have helped in DivestNY’s vital campaign.”**

David Levine, President ASBC



After the November election, ASBC developed a memo highlighting our members’ key issues for the Biden-Harris Agency Review Team of the Department of Interior. Top-line issues include the immediate suspension of the sales of coastal drilling leases; stronger protection for Bears Ears, the Grand Staircase Escalante, and all National Monuments; and working with the EPA to protect Bristol Bay from Pebble Mine. Contributors to this memo include Rebecca Rubin (Marstel-Day), Avi Garbow (Patagonia), Shoren Brown (Bristol Bay Defense Fund), Wizipan Little Elk (Rosebud Sioux Economic Development Corporation) and Paul Moinester (Outdoor Policy Outfit). ASBC was especially pleased to have supported Businesses for Bristol Bay and its allies in their long fight against Pebble Mine, and newly inaugurated President Biden’s immediate executive action on these issues was profoundly encouraging.

It is worth noting that, at the end of 2020, ASBC remained the only business organization to endorse the Green New Deal. We’re proud to have immediately seen the GND’s value as a blueprint when it was introduced by Sen. Markey and Rep. Ocasio-Cortez in 2019. While legislative strategy often requires small steps, our members expect that ASBC’s pioneering leadership in support of the Green New Deal blueprint will put bold, ambitious sustainability moves on the national agenda.



## Rebuilding & Upgrading Infrastructure

ASBC is a tireless advocate for resilient, sustainable infrastructure improvements on behalf of businesses, the public and the planet. The Army Corps of Engineers has given most of our nation's infrastructure such as bridges, water systems and other essentials a grade of "D." Continuing tragic, costly infrastructure failures across the U.S. testify to this situation, which until the 1980s would have been unimaginable in the United States. Increasingly frequent and severe weather disasters have strained our already-fragile systems beyond their limits, and further delay accelerates dangers and costs.

In 2020, ASBC mobilized businesses to advocate for several broad, long-deferred infrastructure initiatives. Starting in March, we supported The National Infrastructure Bank Act (HR.6422) to establish a national, self-sustaining bank that, while remaining fiscally neutral, would help states repair their crumbling infrastructure. In July, we mobilized business support for Senate action on the House-passed Moving Forward Act (HR.2), a \$1.5T sustainable infrastructure proposal that would create millions of jobs, strongly mitigate the climate crisis, and reduce inequities among American communities.

Beyond major national infrastructure funding initiatives, ASBC focused on infrastructure with the broadest, most crucial impact on all our interrelated areas of concern: clean water and Internet access.

### Clean Water

In 2020, ASBC brought together an wide array of businesses to advocate for reducing nutrient pollution of our water sources, upgrading water delivery and wastewater infrastructure, and making businesses more resilient to floods and droughts. While the lobbying prowess of polluting industries is formidable, ASBC made sure policymakers heard the needs of businesses that rely on clean water as much as consumers do. Continuing our multi-year campaign, Clean Water is Good for Business, ASBC made the business case for regulations and provided our Clean Water Principles to aid business supporters and legislators. However, despite an intensive, year-long effort by ASBC and allies, Trump's EPA finalized the replacement of the Clean Water Rule in January. The WOTUS (Waters of the U.S.) changes implemented under the new Navigable Waters Protection Rule left clean water protections in the country the weakest in 50 years. ASBC continued our opposition, <https://www.asbcouncil.org/protect-waters-usand> supported push-back legislation including the Clean Water Resolution. We will continue aggressively pursuing this common-sense goal for healthier outcomes in 2021.

ASBC also provided invaluable support to multi-state, region-spanning coalitions' campaigns to protect the Delaware River Watershed and the Upper Mississippi River Basin. Together, these impact most businesses and communities in the contiguous U.S., contribute millions of jobs and over \$370 billion in economic activity each year. For each, ASBC developed the educational business case, mobilized company leaders and motivated legislators at all levels.

Our requests included more funding for water infrastructure, watershed protection and restoration, and Congressional consideration of the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act.

As the ASBC business case notes, the federal government's per-capita spending on water infrastructure dropped from \$76 per person in 1977 to \$11 per person in 2014 (2014 dollars; CBO 2015). When in 2020, the House passed bills for bigger investments in our decaying water infrastructure, ASBC and our allies pushed the Senate to consider them as essential, creating millions of jobs and saving U.S. companies \$94 billion a year in retained sales over the next decade. In August, ASBC mobilized businesses to support our sign-on letter to Congress. We asserted that further neglect of our degraded water infrastructure invites more sewage overflows and stormwater runoff that pollutes our waterways. We also co-authored an op-ed with Susan Harris of Cerulean, LLC, making the business case for public and private investment in green stormwater infrastructure. <https://www.asbcouncil.org/op-ed/investing-green-stormwater-infrastructure-good-business>.



### **Internet Access**

ASBC has been a strong supporter of net neutrality since it was first threatened. The Internet has been one of a very few level playing fields for growing America's more innovative and mission-driven businesses, and it is essential for equity in business and economic opportunity. While the threat to net neutrality was not ended in 2020, it has been eclipsed by the sudden, nationwide requirement for remote work and schooling triggered by the mid-March onset of Covid-19.

The pandemic exposed the severity of the digital divide in the U.S., and ASBC is actively addressing its causes. Along with financial challenges that hinder many families' access to basics like laptops for students and remote work, the divide is caused by lack of infrastructure for universal broadband access to the digital universe.

ASBC has supported a national plan to address this lack of infrastructure and provide high-speed Internet access to all, particularly communities of color or low income, which are often currently unserved or under-served. As Americans in all geographic areas need the Internet to access remote health care, education and jobs, ASBC has supported broadband funding as essential to pandemic relief. We were encouraged that the relief bill passed in late December allocated \$7 billion to connect tens of millions of Americans to high-speed Internet.

All types of public infrastructure, projects have been promised for years and needed for longer, but policymakers' reluctance to consider the epic expense of deferred infrastructure work has caused delay after delay. Funding shortfalls have been exacerbated by decades of ill-conceived tax breaks, tax policies and other issues. Understanding that today's biggest challenges are interconnected, ASBC will continue making the business case for wiser public policy in these areas -- and for major investment in America's infrastructure. It is the framework and foundation for a more healthful, just and robust economy that works for all.





## Addressing Race, Improving Equity

Focus on diversity, equity and inclusion is central to, and integrated into, all of ASBC's high-road prescriptions and is maintained by our Race & Equity Working Group (REWG). This group, led by ASBC Board of Directors Vice-Chair MaryAnne Howland, founder and CEO of Ibis Communications and Global Diversity Leadership Exchange, aims to improve the economic health and wellbeing of traditionally marginalized sectors of society to foster an economy that genuinely works for all.

Individuals' racial prejudice has been an uncomfortable topic for most white Americans, but until 2020, systemic racism was a near-forbidden topic. Denial was manifest from the Supreme Court on down. The blatant killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and too many others -- and the ways officialdom excused those responsible -- touched off weeks of mostly-peaceful demonstrations by both minority and white Americans of all ages. While ASBC has always advocated for policies that advance a more just, equitable, sustainable economy and society, we felt it important to bring our sustainable business community's support to the fore.

Shortly after the George Floyd murder by Minneapolis police, ASBC mobilized business leaders to confront racism. On June 9, we held a Virtual Town Hall that drew well over 300 registrants to discuss what business leaders and the business community could do collectively to reinvigorate the battle against systemic racism. ASBC's efforts included practical suggestions for businesses' workplace efforts, virtual gatherings to develop specific policy solutions, and mobilizing support for legislative change.

On June 24, more than 400 registrants participated in The ASBC/REWG Race and Equity Dialogue to learn and strategize needed reforms to reduce racism, inequity and economic injustice. Legislation we encouraged attendees and our membership to support included the Saving Our Streets bill, directing federal pandemic economic relief to businesses serving communities of color or low income and businesses owned by people of color, by veterans, and others who are too often excluded from federal funding, much less private bank funding.

ASBC also encouraged support for two policing reform bills. The Qualified Immunity Defense bill (HR 7085) would end qualified immunity, a protection an accused police officer may invoke to avoid conviction if they are brought to court, even in cases of gross misconduct. The Justice in Policing Act (HR 7120) would proscribe certain police actions and require others.





Our Race & Equity work under Chair Howland has utilized small group sessions focused on protecting the election, community investment, confronting racism on a local level, policing policies, investor responsibility, and racism and the food system. Speakers have included Ben Cohen, co-founder of Ben & Jerry's; Aya Ibrahim, legislative assistant to Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley; Tequila Johnson, co-founder & VP, The Equity Alliance; Derek Peebles, executive director, American Independent Business Association (AMIBA); Thomas Opper, executive VP of ASBC; Val Red-Horse Mohl, Chief Financial Officer, East Bay Community Foundation; Mary Beth Gallagher, executive director, Investor Advocates for Social Justice (IASJ), an ICCR member; GW Chew (aka Chef Chew), General Manager of Veg Hub and advisory board member of JEDI Collaborative; and April De Simone, founder, designing the WE and Undesign the Redline.

On September 17, ASBC held a forum on Racism and the Food System, exploring how the current system helps marginalize Black, Indigenous and other people of color. Participants included REWG Chair Howland; GW Chew, founder of Something Better Foods; ASBC Policy Manager Colton Fagundes; and other leaders of ASBC's Regenerative Agriculture & Justice Working Group. Among remedies to dismantle systemic racism and create a more just and equitable food system, the forum concluded that we must invest in Black-owned businesses within the healthy food system, give all farmers equitable access to markets and to government farming programs, ensure workers are treated and paid fairly, and improve access to nutritious food, especially for BIPOC, to alleviate food insecurity in the U.S.



In December, ASBC's Race and Equity Working Group welcomed Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley's legislative assistant Aya Ibrahim. The group discussed changes in the political environment occasioned by a new incoming Congress and the new Biden Administration, and learned about legislation furthering economic, environmental and racial justice Rep. Pressley would introduce in the 117th Congress.

While race-related inequities deservedly dominated the nation's attention in the summer of 2020, ASBC also earned recognition for our efforts opposing systemic LGBTQ discrimination. A news article in Triple Pundit, Business Responds to Watershed Supreme Court Ruling on LGBTQ Rights, reported on ASBC's amicus brief filed with the Supreme Court in support of LGBTQ employees and quoted ASBC President David Levine in support of the SCOTUS decision. A news article in Fortune, Fortune 500 CEOs praise landmark LGBTQ antidiscrimination ruling, also reported on the ASBC amicus brief.

From capital access to environmental justice, ASBC advocates for policies that improve equity and inclusion in the workplace and increase access to economic opportunities that stabilize and strengthen all our communities. In the interest of fair play and a level playing field, our members are committed to helping redress and correct longstanding inequities. Our commitment is animated by our awareness that our country needs everyone's contributions to the full extent of their talents -- and that in a consumer-driven economy, we all do better when we ALL do better.





## Protecting Democracy

Even before the deadly January 6, 2021 assault on the Capitol, responsible business leaders had grown concerned about the ongoing, escalating harm to our democratic processes, including from the highest levels of U.S. government. Business relies heavily on a safe, orderly civic environment, and while many business leaders outside the ASBC-SVC community assumed this issue would not affect them, more have come to realize that our economy is vulnerable when the democratic republic it relies on is under attack. In the 2016-2020 timeframe, enemies both foreign and domestic made significant impacts, starting with the timeworn erosion of cornerstone rights such as voting in fair and free elections. From the start, ASBC has made our stand clear and mobilized business leaders and allies to speak up for democracy to other businesses and to our elected representatives.

In 2020, our Business for Democracy initiatives encouraged responsible businesses to give their employees Time Off to Vote and volunteer as election officials. One notable example was ASBC member Badger Balm's strategic commitment to give employees paid time to vote and help others vote through the multi-company initiative, Make Time to Vote.

In March, ASBC Vice-Chair MaryAnne Howland and ASBC Director of Marketing Communications Mary Wynn Ryan coauthored a blog post, Full, Fair Elections: What's in it for business? to motivate business leaders to encourage voting and become advocates of fair elections across the nation. In September, ASBC Policy Strategy Director Carolyn Pincus detailed leading ASBC member Seventh Generation's multi-faceted campaign to boost voting in her blog post, <https://www.asbcouncil.org/blog/why-your-business-sustainability-depends-empowering-voters>. These posts were part of ASBC's campaign for a free, fair election, conveying the high stakes to business leaders, urging them to vote and help their employees, communities, colleagues and other stakeholders to vote, too.

ASBC also provided frequent, convenient procedural updates and reminders about deadlines (essential with problem-plagued pandemic voting options) and other key details via email and social media throughout the election season. To support business leaders in their efforts to get out the vote (GOTV) and make the business case to those in their sphere of influence, ASBC also created and offered resources including a one-page fact sheet, "Business for Democracy: Why the Vote Matters" and a sign-on pledge for businesses to promote election participation.





With the crucial importance of vote-by-mail in 2020, ASBC supported our ally 1worker1vote in its coop worker-owners’ campaign, outlined at <https://usps.coop/>. We also led business opposition to new problems at the venerable U.S. Postal Service that endangered fair voting as well as essential everyday business transactions during the pandemic. ASBC mobilized business members to demand full USPS function at such a crucial time with a sign-on letter to the USPS board and Postmaster General.

In October, a Forbes blog post, *When Businesses Support Their Employees In Voting, It Makes A Huge Difference*, quoted ASBC Co-founder/President David Levine: “ASBC believes that voting is an indelible part of doing business in the U.S., as it strengthens accountability in public policy, primacy of the rule of law, legitimacy of American public and private institutions, and an inclusive and equitable economy.”

For ASBC and everyone worldwide concerned about protecting democracy and fair elections, the death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg during 2020’s election season was a searing loss in a year of losses. Speaking for many, David Levine said, “Throughout her career, Justice Ginsburg was an unyielding champion of justice and fairness; principles that ASBC has always stood for. Her commitment to equity will continue to inspire our work and we will commemorate her inspiring life by advocating for the ideals she stood for.”



In December, ASBC celebrated a long-awaited victory: Passage of the Corporate Transparency Act. ASBC was an integral part of the Financial Accountability and Corporate Transparency (FACT) Coalition, and the success of this Act will effectively end corrupting influence and abuse by anonymous shell companies. The Act was included in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2021, which passed the House and Senate with majorities sufficient to override President Trump’s veto. The curtailing of anonymous corporations role in money laundering, terrorism funding, increasing kleptocracy and other practices harmful to society and democratic governance is a keystone achievement ASBC is proud to have supported.



## Selected Affiliates' Accomplishments

ASBC has continued to work closely with our place-based affiliates. In 2020, they made headway on a wide range of issues in their municipalities, states and regions, and with ASBC on a national level. All deserve nationwide applause for making progress in these challenging times for our country. Here are some select highlights.

### LOCAL FIRST ARIZONA

For the Feed Phoenix Initiative, Local First AZ partnered with the City of Phoenix, which serves Arizona's largest metro population, on an innovative program using CARES Act dollars to provide free meals to residents in need while supporting local farms, restaurants, and food entrepreneurs impacted by the pandemic. Since August, 46 restaurants sourcing local produce from 12 urban farms produced over 60,000 meals for various nonprofit organizations and homeless encampments across the city. The \$951,000 grant initiative did two things: spread dollars as widely as possible in our local food community and delivered high quality, nutritious meals to vulnerable populations. The program was so successful that it has been extended for three more months in 2021. To learn more: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-12-17/phoenix-used-food-aid-program-to-save-smallbusinesses-as-well>

In just the month of March, Local First Arizona raised over \$1.3 million through the Small Business Relief Fund, providing immediate aid to 600 micro-enterprises thanks to the outpouring support from Arizona's largest businesses and community nonprofits. Local First AZ predicted federal aid would be slow to trickle in and "unbankable" businesses would be left in the dust in the process. To better position Arizona's local economy on a path to recovery, Local First AZ deployed funds to Arizona's smallest businesses: those with 0-3 employees that generate less than \$250,000 in annual revenue. To learn more: <http://www.localfirstaz.com/small-business-relief-fund>

In August, Local First AZ partnered with the Office of Arizona Governor Doug Ducey to launch the Arizona Small Business Rent and Mortgage Relief Grant program and distribute \$10 million in grants to small businesses required to close during Arizona's first stay-at-home order. A total of 789 businesses such as gyms and fitness centers, bars, water parks, and movie theaters received two months' worth of rent relief after a very slow summer. Grants were capped at \$25,000; the average grant awarded per applicant to date is \$12,243.





## CONNECTICUT SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS COUNCIL

In 2020, Connecticut Sustainable Business Council (CTSBC) celebrated Governor Lamont's signing onto the Transportation Climate Initiative, an important effort they have supported from the beginning that has positive implications for infrastructure and transportation as well as climate change mitigation. The Initiative established a declining cap on carbon dioxide pollution from gasoline and on-road diesel fuel sold into participating jurisdictions, and requires fuel suppliers to purchase allowances auctioned by participating jurisdictions to cover the emissions from the fossil fuel components of that fuel. The number of emission allowances would decline each year, guaranteeing a reduction of at least 26% in carbon emissions from transportation from 2022 to 2032.

CTSBC also produced the First Annual CT Climate Action Business Summit, a virtual, three-day event that attracted nearly 300 attendees and showcased presentations with 40 experts, advocates and leaders on a wide range of sustainability issues relevant to businesses of all sectors. Interest in this premier event indicates it should grow over the coming years.



## BUSINESS LEADERS FOR A BETTER MICHIGAN

This collaborative initiative includes People First Economy, Michigan Minority Business Development Council, South Michigan Sustainable Business Forum, and West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum. In 2020, the coalition took up several vital efforts which met with encouraging support. They mounted a business-led campaign supporting Paid Leave that included numerous webinars, a business survey, media engagement and production of a report, *The Business Case for Paid Sick Leave*, that was widely distributed. They also led the state's efforts to secure greater federal support for Michigan's small and mid-sized enterprises in the midst of the pandemic.

Another dynamic development was Business Leaders for a Better Michigan's work in leading the creation of the Prosperous Economy Working Group and the crafting of policy statements. This highly collaborative effort initially involving 81 business and community leaders and 17 as members of leadership team.



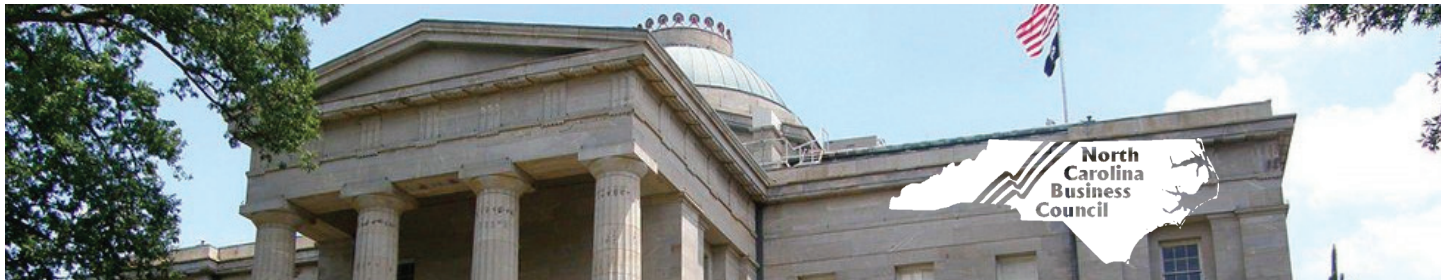


**NEW JERSEY SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS COUNCIL**

As the New Jersey coalition’s table lead for the Energy Foundation, New Jersey Sustainable Business Council (NJSBC) coordinated business support for the successful passage of the Electric Vehicle (EV) law, one of the most progressive in the country. The law, passed in January 2020, offers rebate program and expansion of EV-charging infrastructure that will catalyze the electrification of the transportation sector, which will create new jobs, lower carbon emissions and improve human health.

NJSBC was named to the Main Street subcommittee of Governor Murphy’s Restart & Recovery Advisory Committee. In this role, it submitted the ASBC report NJSBC had helped to develop, From Crisis to Opportunity: Recommendations for State & Local Governments. Many of ASBC’s recommendations are being implemented in New Jersey, including development of offshore wind power and a new offshore wind construction port, implementation of community solar in environmental justice communities, upgrading energy efficiency targets and programs, and electrifying public fleets and transportation infrastructure.

In 2020, NJSBC also celebrated a significant win for environmental justice. Working as a business ally to environmental justice organizations, they helped to pass one of the country’s most progressive EJ laws; the successful result of a 12-year effort. To reduce the combined levels of air, soil and water pollution, the “cumulative impact” law requires all new permits and renewals for pollution-producing facilities to be reviewed and approved by members of their local communities before being allowed to proceed.



**NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS COUNCIL**

In 2020, North Carolina Business Council (NCBC) broadened business engagement and advocacy for healthcare expansion and redistricting reform. They helped lead dozens of statewide business groups and hundreds of business owners to commit to making healthcare and redistricting reform policies top priorities for the 2021 legislative session.

NCBC also amplified the business voice in support of initiatives furthering climate, clean energy, and clean water. In their service on the Governor’s Clean Energy Task Force, NCBC delivered the business case for sustainability to state policymakers.

On behalf of NC communities and the businesses that serve them, NCBC increased awareness on how to build local economies through small business investment, and amplified the voice of business on this practical core issue. This effort included helping to foster and lead collaborations with a variety of statewide business groups in advocating for policies that sustain small companies and remove barriers to success.



## NEW YORK SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS COUNCIL

In 2020, New York Sustainable Business Council (NYSBC) engaged responsible business leaders across New York State and helped to achieve a number of significant wins. NYSBC helped to achieve bans on PFAS chemicals in food packaging; on sale or distribution of expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam (a.k.a. Styrofoam) in disposable food service containers or polystyrene loose fill packaging (a.k.a. packing peanuts); and on the chemical trichloroethylene in a variety of manufacturing and industrial cleaning processes.

They also helped achieve adoption of the Child Safe Products Act, requiring manufacturers to disclose chemicals of concern in children’s products and to remove especially toxic chemicals; and adoption of strong “green” purchasing specifications.

NYSBC supported the successful designation of oil and gas waste as “hazardous,” thereby closing the fracking waste loophole for New York State. They also helped secure a commitment by the New York State Comptroller to review fossil-fuel company investments in the State’s pension fund and divest from those that do not meet minimum standards.

Other efforts included helping to draft ASBC’s From Crisis to Opportunity: Recommendations for State & Local Governments, with focus on chapters covering Water and Climate & Energy; co-organizing the New York State Earth Day 2020 Virtual Advocacy Day; and partnering with business leaders in NJ, PA, and DE to help protect the Delaware River Watershed.



## GOOD BUSINESS COLORADO

Despite 2020’s extreme economic challenges and networking limitations, Good Business Colorado (GBC) grew its membership to represent 25 out of 64 counties in the state. They recruited 137 new business members and increased GBC membership of businesses from marginalized communities (Black, LatinX, Immigrant, LGBTQ, Asian, Middle-Eastern) by 453%. To help members better understand the policy issues and better cope with the day-to-day challenges of 2020, GBC hosted 41 virtual events. Thanks to a generous funder, they also generated \$27,762.16 for GBC brick-and-mortar and online retailers through matching gift card funds.

In 2020’s advocacy efforts, GBC partnered with scores of business and community organizations and mobilized GBC members to take a total of 546 cumulative actions to help build a prosperous, equitable and sustainable Colorado.





## **SOUTH CAROLINA SMALL BUSINESS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

To help the state’s many small companies survive economic impacts of the pandemic, South Carolina Small Business Chamber of Commerce (SCSBCC) took on the task of promoting relief provided by federal and state COVID-19 stimulus programs. They successfully advocated for \$40 million in state small business grants using CARES Act funds allocated to South Carolina.

Protecting the integrity of America’s elections has been a top priority for SCSBCC, and they continued their multi-year “Business 4 Protecting the Election” campaign to focus attention on interference in the Presidential election.

SCSBCC has been heavily instrumental in boosting support for a nationwide ban on all new oil drilling leases on public lands and waters. In 2020, a multi-year effort they helped lead achieved a major victory for SC’s vital environment and economy in 2020. To combat the destructive impact of offshore oil exploration and drilling, SCSBCC continued the federal lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Commerce filed in December 2018 by SCSBCC and 16 coastal municipalities in SC. This lawsuit was successful: In November 2020, the judge blocked seismic testing permits from being issued for oil exploration in the Atlantic.

An ongoing campaign continued in 2020 was SCSBCC’s advocacy for the legislature to sell the stateowned electric utility, which serves over two million customers. The utility, Santee Cooper, ran up a \$4-billion debt for a failed, multi-year nuclear energy construction project. SCSBCC asserts that selling the utility to an investor-owned utility operation could remove the debt from ratepayers, lower rates, and close coal plants in favor of renewable energy.

## **LOWCOUNTRY LOCAL FIRST**

Throughout the exceptional challenges of 2020, Low Country First (LLF) urged South Carolina’s Lowcountry consumers to buy locally and promoted the economic development benefits of supporting area businesses. Since the pandemic hit in March, LLF helped hundreds of local businesses access federal funding, including helping 51 small firms in the Charleston area receive \$60K in Small Business Rapid Relief grants. LLF also created workshops and robust resources to share support.



On behalf of small business, LLF intensified its advocacy in Washington, D.C. for economic development and other needs. They also hosted two elected officials’ roundtables with small business owners, plus a statewide presentation to help government leaders better support local businesses.

Despite the pandemic, LLF continued to help local businesses operate profitably while maintaining high-road values and purpose beyond profits. LLF maintained its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion; and to its initiatives such as Good Enterprises and Local Works. With the goal of extending business opportunities to all, LLF was proud to graduate a multi-generation class of 70 entrepreneurs from LLF’s online Community Business Academy.





## Our Goal: Capitalism That Works for All

The year 2020 has posed the most terrible challenges to our general welfare and our democratic republic in a century. With 4% of the world's population and 20% of the world's dead in a mismanaged pandemic, a resurgence of fascism a mere 80 years after our world-saving war against it, a regressive upswing in deadly racial discrimination, many millions still struggling a decade after the Great Recession due to systemic wage suppression and stratospheric healthcare costs, increasingly destructive weather extremes, and the looming doom of climate change are all testing us in epic ways.

Nobody welcomes this scenario, but we can welcome opportunities for transformational change that may not occur under easier circumstances.

In our current crises, the cynical ideas that “government is the problem” and “trickle-down economics” is the solution have been tested. They've been found utterly inadequate to maintain the basic wellbeing and opportunities that once made America the envy of the world. In this void, ASBC sees a new chance for public policy creating a capitalism that works for all.

We also see the key role ASBC's savvy, mission-based members can have in leading this transformation. They've already handled big moves with high stakes. They're innately valiant. And they know when we harness the power of business to do good, great things happen.

In 2021, ASBC will focus on furthering sound policies in these broad issue areas: the role of business in Covid-19 recovery; the high-road workplace (including paid sick leave and livable minimum wage), infrastructure (including clean water and broadband access), climate and energy (including subsidy and pension investment decisions) race and equity (including access to capital and environmental justice), the circular economy (including sustainable packaging and safer chemicals), corporate governance (including board diversity and transparency) and protecting democracy (including more free, fair elections and less big-money influence).

Our co-founder, board chair and CEO, Jeffrey Hollender, has said that his goal is “to create a more just and sustainable world, a world of greater wellbeing and the fulfillment of human potential.” He's also said that, “corporate responsibility is the best strategic as well as financial path that most businesses can follow.” We think that says it all.

In the face of truly epic challenges in every American arena, ASBC is working harder than ever. We are determined to make the business case for restoring and expanding America's potential as the land of opportunity for all. We hope ASBC's 2020 achievements inspire and encourage you to persist. Together, we'll prevail.

