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EDUCATING YOUR EMPLOYEES

THE BASICS ON DISCUSSING
ELECTIONS AND ISSUES

Why Should You Educate Your Employees?

The laws and regulations that impact small businesses don't just affect the owner — they also affect employees. One key to gaining momentum for small-business issues is enlisting the support of those closely affected by those issues.

Employees who understand how health care, legal reform, tax relief, regulatory reform and other small-business issues impact their livelihood will be more likely to support candidates and policies that support small business.

In educating and informing your employees about small-business issues, candidates, elected officials, voter registration, absentee ballots and elections, you will be making the voice of small business stronger at the ballot box and in your community.

Make sure your employees know why these key small-business issues are important to you and your business and — most importantly — why they should be important to *them*.

Opening Lines of Communication: Making It Easy to Talk to the Boss

Open lines of communication are key to success in any business environment. They are even more important when discussing political issues and campaigns. In this situation, instead of being seen as the decision maker, you want to be seen as a credible source of knowledge and information.

Assure your employees they can approach you with questions regarding the political issues that your business faces and that affect them. When you are asked for an opinion on an issue, candidate or campaign, offer your position and back it up with facts. Show them hard evidence of how an issue — like small-business health plans — can directly affect the business and their livelihood.

Your goal is to offer the information they need to make their own educated decision. The key to getting this information across is to make it easy for them to ask for it. By encouraging employees to come to you with questions about issues or any other aspect of the political process, you are opening those lines of communication necessary to begin an effective dialogue.

Become a Resource

Small-business owners are leaders in their communities. And, as a small-business owner, you are looked to for stability and leadership by your employees and also by members of your community.

Your entrepreneurial experience offers a unique insight into small-business issues that your employees may not have. In addition, your involvement with organizations like NFIB arms you with information that is also relevant to your employees.

Take your insight, experience and information and become a welcoming resource for your employees to learn more about issues and elections. Share information on small-business issues, registration deadlines, candidate issue positions, early and absentee voting and the importance of voting. Encourage your employees to become part of the political process by making an informed decision at the ballot box.

Talking Issues: Why Your Issues Matter to Them

Do small-business issues affect employees of small businesses? There is a definite correlation between the profitability and the success of a small business and the ability of the small-business owner to provide better benefits and wages for their employees.

Issues important to you as a small-business owner, like health care, legal reform, tax relief and regulatory reform, should also be important to your employees. Talk to them about these issues and how these issues impact your business — and ultimately them.

“ Owner income from a small business is correlated with the level of wages the business pays, the likelihood the owner provides employee health insurance, and the likelihood he sponsors an employee pension plan. Most importantly, these relationships indicate that the business’ owner and the business’ employees are in the venture together. They jointly prosper or they jointly fail. If the owner does relatively well, average wages are relatively high and the likelihood of health insurance and a good pension plan rise notably. The opposite is also true. ”

- **William J. Dennis, Jr.**,

“Wages, Health Insurance and Pension Plans: The Relationship Between Employee Compensation and Business Owner Income,” Small Business Economics, 15: 247-263, 2000

Health Care

Health-care costs are going through the roof, and small-business owners have very few choices when selecting insurance coverage for their employees. The tipping point is here, and small-business owners are begging for solutions to rising health-care costs, lack of access and other issues.

Due to the economies of scale and the dynamics of group purchasing, the cost of health insurance is much higher per employee for small businesses than it is for larger companies. This bias against smaller businesses is exacerbated by the fact that small

businesses that offer benefits are forced to purchase health insurance on a state-by-state basis, while the large companies that self-insure operate across state boundaries. Small-Business Health Plans can help reduce the number of uninsured and help more small businesses offer health-care coverage by giving them the same accessibility, affordability and choice in the health-care marketplace that big business now enjoys.

Finding and affording quality health insurance is a top concern of small-business owners. Of the 45 million Americans with no health insurance, 51 percent are small-business owners, their employees or dependents. Important health-care solutions like medical malpractice reform, health savings accounts, health-care tax credits, and Small-Business Health Plans will help small-business owners better afford health insurance for their employees.

Legal Reform

Just one frivolous lawsuit can force a small business to close its doors forever. Frivolous lawsuits create a climate of fear for America's small businesses. While some claims are legitimate, a large percentage is completely without merit. However, individuals and entities that are sued still have to defend themselves, and this defense is often costly to both the business and to consumers.

The country is also facing a medical liability crisis. Skyrocketing medical malpractice insurance rates and unlimited damages awards contribute to the increasing cost of health care for small business. The situation is forcing doctors to retire or move to other states, leading to severe shortages of specialists and causing emergency rooms to drastically cut back services. These critical shortages in the health-care system lead to increased costs for small-business owners struggling to afford health insurance for their employees. Legal reform is needed to level the courtroom playing field for small business.

Tax Relief

A complex tax code and burdensome taxes are among the top concerns of small-business owners. Taxes that are too high, and a system that is ridiculously complex, stand in the way of small-business growth. Tax relief is essential at both the state and federal level. Tax relief for small-business owners, such as making both small-business expensing limits and tax rate cuts permanent, will put money back in the hands of small-business owners. This will enable them to hire new employees and increase wages and benefits for current employees, and it will put money directly into the economy as owners purchase more equipment.

Regulatory Reform

Federal regulations and mandates create an enormous burden and are much harder on small businesses than their larger counterparts. Small businesses don't have legal teams or HR departments to sort through Washington's red tape and they can't absorb the financial costs like big businesses can. Regulatory costs per employee for small businesses are approximately 55-60 percent more than the costs for large firms. And, although small businesses employ just over half of the work force, they shoulder nearly two-thirds of the total business regulatory costs. This regulatory burden wastes precious time and resources for small businesses around the country and must be reduced.

For more information on specific small-business issues visit www.NFIB.com/issues or contact NFIB at (800) 552-NFIB.

Ways to Communicate

Political issues and campaigns can be difficult subjects to discuss in a business environment. As the business owner, you do not want to impose your political views on your employees. However, you do want to offer them the same factual information you were armed with in making your decision on who to vote for or what issue position to support. There are many ways to communicate this information. The key is finding the appropriate format that best suits your business and employees. Below are a few suggestions:

Information Wall – In your employee break room or common area, set up a bulletin board with political and election related information. Include a calendar of important deadlines and election dates, voter registration information, small-business issue information, absentee ballot forms, a list of online resources for more information, polling locations, offices up for election and information about the candidates.

Staff Meeting – Hold a staff meeting with your employees to talk about small-business issues, elections and the importance of voting. At the meeting, provide your employees with information on registering to vote, absentee ballots, issues, candidates and important dates. The key here is to keep the information factual and unbiased. Let your employees make their own informed decision at the ballot box.

Employee Newsletter – If you already have an employee newsletter, add a feature highlighting the upcoming elections. If you do not have a newsletter, now is a great time to start one. It does not have to be elaborate — a one-page sheet with important information regarding voter registration, election dates, etc. will do. Your employees will appreciate the time you put into keeping them informed.

Payroll Stuffers – Include reminders regarding voter registration, absentee ballots and elections in your employees' paychecks. This is an easy way to remind people to be informed and involved.

Setting the Example: Active and Involved

Just as you are often the source of information to your employees, you are also the example. Make issues and elections a top priority. The success of your business depends greatly on the positions and actions of those in office. For that reason, issues and elections should be a priority for the employees of small businesses as well.

Make sure you are well informed of relevant small-business issues and where candidates stand on those issues. Know important dates — voter registration deadlines, absentee ballot requests and early voting. Get involved with candidates' campaigns and NFIB in making a difference on Election Day. Stay up to date on what is going on in campaigns in your community.

NFIB can assist you with all of this and help you set a great example for your employees. Much of this information is on www.NFIB.com/politics and the NFIB staff is always available at (800) 552-NFIB to answer any questions you may have.

VOTE: Registration Drives, Absentee Ballot and Early Voting

Once your employees understand how small-business issues affect them and where the candidates stand on those issues, it is essential to get them to the polls. But first they must be registered to vote. Voter registration drives can be conducted year-round and they are very easy to organize.

Anyone can register to vote online at www.NFIB.com/politics. It is an easy, step-by-step process, which results in the prospective voter mailing in a form to their elections office. In addition, you may obtain voter registration forms directly from your elections

office. Make sure you know and communicate the registration deadlines to your employees and allow them time to register.

Even though many people are registered to vote, a large percentage of registered voters do not make it to the polls on Election Day. As a small-business owner, you know first hand how hectic a workday can get. There is no reason to wait until Election Day to vote — for you or your employees.

Absentee ballot voting is available in most states, although they do have different deadlines and rules. You may see which states allow absentee voting and the deadlines for ballot requests at www.NFIB.com/politics. Encourage your employees to take advantage of this opportunity if it is available in your state. They will not have to take time off to vote and can avoid the lines and scheduling conflicts that often occur on Election Day.

Early voting is another option in a growing number of states, and information is also available at www.NFIB.com/politics.

Election Day: Voting - Your Priority and Theirs

Election Day should be a focus of your communications with your employees. Vote early or absentee if it is available in your state and encourage your employees to do the same. This will ensure no one misses the chance to vote and they won't have to take extra time on Election Day to wait in long lines at the polls. If they haven't voted already, give them time to vote during the workday. If possible, allow them to take the day off and volunteer with a campaign or be a poll watcher.

Election Day should also be a focus for you, whether you are volunteering, voting, encouraging friends and colleagues to vote, or celebrating the election of another pro-small-business candidate. Being more involved will make you and your employees feel more connected with the political process and a part of the effort to better your business and the greater community.

Legal Do's and Don'ts

The hesitancy that comes with discussing political campaigns and issues with employees is often associated with a fear of what's legal and what's not. Below are some clear and simple guidelines you can follow to make sure you are not only legal but also effective in your efforts. These guidelines are based on federal election laws. Regulations pertaining to state elections vary from state to state. For information regarding state elections, consult your state's election commission.

Do not hesitate to contact NFIB's political staff for assistance or clarification at (800) 552-NFIB or political@nfib.org.

DO's

DO base all of your information on the facts surrounding an election or issue — not on your personal views.

DO allow your employees to take personal time off to volunteer with a campaign of their choice or at the polls on Election Day.

DO share issue related information from NFIB with your employees (voting records, issue positions, news articles).

DO encourage employees to financially assist the candidate of their choice or a political effort they support.

DO encourage your employees to register to vote, be informed, stay involved and vote.

DON'Ts

DON'T tell your employees who to vote for.

DON'T give your employees paid time off to volunteer with any campaign. Employees may elect to use vacation time or unpaid leave to do so.

DON'T share partisan, members-only information from NFIB with employees (NFIB endorsements, express advocacy communications).

DON'T reimburse employees for their political contributions or require them to make contributions to a political campaign.

DON'T require employees to participate in the political process or single out employees based on their involvement or lack thereof.