



American  
Sustainable  
Business  
Network

# 2021 Annual Report

*Business for a  
Just &  
Sustainable  
Economy*







**“The American Sustainable Business [Network] is doing some of the most important work in this country.”**  
—*Sen. Ron Wyden, 2021*

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# A Message from the Board Co-Chairs

**W**e are honored to lead the esteemed board of the American Sustainable Business Network, following in the path of MaryAnne Howland, to whom we are grateful for her service. As you will read in the following pages, our accomplishments during 2021 were significant thanks to a dedicated staff and supportive members and foundation partners.

We take the lead of a new organization founded on an impressive pioneering history. The combination of ASBC and SVC brings with it new opportunities and benefits for our members and what we envision as a more impactful organization to shape the inclusive, just, and sustainable economy on which we all rely.

Among the priorities we set forth are to:

- Align the ASBN team behind a shared culture and strategic vision now that the merger has successfully been completed.
- Diligently foster justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) principles throughout the Board, team, and organization as well as at the policy level.
- Ensure clear focus on strategic vision and goals of ASBN to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness of the organization.
- Ensure growth of the organizational capacity of ASBN through new partnerships and sources of funding, which will effectively leverage existing partnerships to further brand recognition of ASBN as well as its influence and reach.
- Galvanize thought leaders to share ideas, challenge existing systems, and motivate bold change.
- Continue to create innovative programming and unique investment opportunities.
- Innovate new paradigms for creating, measuring, and growing impact throughout our ecosystem.
- Continue to offer business-shifting convening and opportunities to grow business, partnerships, relationships, and impact.

This is a big list because the need for change is equally large and of unquestionable importance. Only through your continued support and engagement can we begin to accomplish these goals. As board members and co-chairs, we are at your service and welcome hearing from you at all times.

With our kindest regards and in service of a better future,



**Seungah Jeong**  
Co-Chair  
ASBN



**Valerie Red-Horse Mohl**  
Co-Chair  
ASBN

# A Message from the President & CEO

**2021: A dynamic year of new leadership, new organization, and great progress.**

**W**e entered 2021 with great hope thanks to new Presidential leadership, while great uncertainty remained about the continued impact of the COVID-19 crisis and inequality, institutional racism, widening gaps in opportunity, and environmental degradation. And January 6 solidified our concern about a sustained divisive political context that would define the political year ahead in 2022. We mobilized the business community to fight for democracy, advocate against systemic racism, mobilized for the transition to a clean energy and to create an economy that works for all.

We pursued our strategic priorities to grow the capacity and services of our organization via the merger of the American Sustainable Business Council and Social Venture Circle, to form the now-thriving American Sustainable Business Network (ASBN). With the excitement and enthusiasm of new parents, we carefully analyzed the benefits of the merger during a year-long assessment which proved the theses that: 1) we work extremely well together, 2) we could grow more quickly together than separately, and 3) our talented teams and services were highly complementary, and we could have a greater impact to make change for a just and sustainable economy. By the end of 2021 we had effectively increased our collective impact to the tune of  $1 + 1 = 3$  (or more), we rebranded the organization drawing up the best of both organizations, and we reshaped our diverse and talented board.

We are grateful to the hard work of our staff and the leadership provided by the board that was led by our chair MaryAnne Howland and her thoughtful support, insightful questions, and inspiration. MaryAnne led during a period of rebuilding and reshaping, and all stakeholders of ASBN owe her a debt of gratitude for her vision. And at the end of 2021 we welcomed Seungah Jeong and Valerie Red-Horse Mohl as co-chairs and look forward to our journey ahead together under their leadership.

Through ASBN's live webinar series, investor events, and spring virtual conference, we saw over 5,000 unique business leaders, impact investors, and others participate in our programming. 2021 also saw the first Impact Retail & Sustainable Products Summit take place with over 500 participants, and nearly 300 members joined us for the first in-person conference since 2019 which was a resounding success earning the highest rated feedback in the organization's history.

We're heartened to see so many of our members take action to improve their internal practices as well as enhance their leadership, deploy capital where it's needed most and join together with us using their voice and power to advocate for advancing needed policies.

Beyond ASBN's investor working groups and capital deployed through relationships cultivated within the network, we offer a program designed specifically to meet the needs of early-stage impact companies, Investors Circle. IC, ASBN's angel investing program, deployed over \$7.5m into early-stage enterprises in 2021. Additionally, ASBN strategically

convened IC members and providers across the capital spectrum to directly move more than \$50m into additional mission-aligned community investments.

One of our most high-profile areas of work was somewhat unanticipated, when for the first time in our history we terminated the membership of and refunded dues paid by a member as a result of their decision to participate in a prison financing deal in Alabama. This violated our membership criteria by making investments that perpetuate systemic racism and inequity, instead of driving positive change.

Our working groups were very active throughout the year and more members participated, creating learning and collaboration environments as well driving our policy outreach. With a White House that invites collaboration, our efforts were recognized no fewer than six times in Administration memos and press announcements, which is among our greatest recognitions. Our investor working groups developed groundbreaking new resources including the first list of individually investible CDFIs and a use case illustrating restorative investing for non-BIPOC funds or intermediaries to follow when investing into BIPOC communities.

And our existing and new supporters took notice as business organization and company membership grew 20 percent during 2021, an unprecedented achievement in our history and reflecting our commitment to diversity. We continued to build out our state affiliates which last year launched Texas and New Mexico, adding to the many other state business organizations that we are proud to have in our network. During 2021 we also brought on new expertise to lead communications, which was a strategic priority and resulted in magnifying our impact. Our work this year has been recognized under headlines in global news organizations such as [Bloomberg](#), [FT](#), [Fortune](#), [The New York Times](#), [Politico](#), and [Reuters](#).

Despite this tremendous progress achieved during 2021, the challenges our country, environment, and economy face remain in great need of repair. We remain committed as ever to encouraging innovation, cooperation, opportunity, and a level playing field. We continue to advocate for the acceptance by businesses of the true costs of doing business and work to shift our economy from externalizing business costs onto society while sequestering profits for an ever-smaller group of beneficiaries, which is unsustainable. Just as businesses draw benefits from all their stakeholders – investors, customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and the environment – they must, in turn, benefit them. To earn credibility, “stakeholder” businesses must be driven by transparent goals and metrics.

**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.**

The policy changes we proposed in our report “[Creating an Economic System that Works for All](#)” continue to guide us and are taking shape in federal policies enacted during 2021. We continued to build campaigns and drive on policy on a range of areas including Protecting our Democracy, Climate, Energy and Environment, Inclusive economies, and we are pleased with the passage of the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act as a start. These unprecedented provisions will help to drive a portion of what is needed to build a sustainable economy through improved public transportation, investments in clean energy, closing the digital divide, and securing clean and safe water for all. Yes, there is much more that needs to be done. 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. Please enjoy reading about our achievements in this 2021 Annual Report. Then, visit ASBN’s [website](#) for our latest reports, updated, and opportunities to join us in action. And let’s get more big things done, together.

**Stay well, safe, and strong.**

With gratitude,



**Jeffrey Hollender**  
Co-Founder & CEO  
ASBN



**David Levine**  
Co-Founder & President  
ASBN

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## New Name & Expanded, Stronger Organization

Initiated as a strategic alignment in 2019 to assess compatibility between ASBC and SVC, in 2021 American Sustainable Business Network (ASBN) was unveiled following the approval by the Boards of both organizations.

Collectively, ASBN is already realizing many of the anticipated benefits in pursuit of creating the leading stakeholder focused business group in the U.S. catalyzing a just and sustainable economy. The resulting organization launched its new name and visual identity in November 2021 and is proud to have retained all staff and harmonized benefits and procedures as planned. Media have recognized ASBN’s new focus and increased core capacities in stories such as these from [Reuters](#) and the podcast [Superpowers for Good](#).

The 14 months of the strategic alliance between the two organizations leading up to the merger showed that by combining membership efforts, membership growth outpaced prior trends by more than double. The combined organization is stronger, more resilient, and better able to thrive in challenging economic times. Each organization has some unique capabilities, such as ASBC’s advocacy and policy work, SVC’s conference and event planning, pitch events, and ASBC’s media communications and coalition building.

The merger is saving money and has created a more time efficient operation as there are several places where each organization duplicates work that will be combined with a single entity such as web management, marketing, social media, development of webinars,



and accounting. In the coming years we are confident that the merger will also provide accelerated growth along with increased member benefits and a streamlined member experience.

Although it is not widely known, SVC and ASBC have a long-shared history. What evolved to become SVC was one of the nation's first and most influential peer organizations dedicated to demonstrating the 'triple bottom line' potential of valuing people, planet, and profit on equal footing.

Through yearly gatherings, peer circles, and structured mentoring, SVC has provided inspiration for new ventures and helped incubate other key contributors to the social venture community including ASBC in 2009. SVC and ASBC were born of the same entrepreneurial spirit and despite becoming independent organizations, the connection and mutual respect between the two remained strong.

The combined ASBN created one of the most powerful entities to represent and advocate on behalf of a new form of capitalism which rejects a sole focus on short-term profits in favor of seeking long-term value and accounting for all stakeholders: owners, workers, families, community, environment, state, nation, and world.



# American Sustainable Business Network



**New Visual Identity**



## American Sustainable Business Network

# Who We Are

## About

American Sustainable Business Network (ASBN) is a movement builder in partnership with the business and investor community. ASBN develops and advocates solutions for policy makers, business leaders, and investors that support an equitable, regenerative, and just economy that benefits all stakeholders. As a multi-issue, membership organization advocating on behalf of every business sector, size, and geography, ASBN and its association members collectively represent over 250,000 businesses across our networks.

## Mission

Our mission is to inform, connect, and mobilize business leaders and investors to transform the public and private sectors toward a sustainable and just economy.

## Vision

Our vision is a sustainable economy that is stakeholder-driven, regenerative, just, and prosperous.

## Values

ASBN believes that justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion must be at the foundation for how we conduct ourselves, our public policy advocacy, and our businesses and investment activity, as we cultivate and grow our community and programs. With clear intent and earnest effort, we will engage our community, and seek leaders in the field to ensure that our impact matches our vision.

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## Bringing the Voice of Businesses to Public Policy

**A**SBN continued its long history to develop its relationships with the Presidential administrations in 2021. Working across each of our campaigns ASBN has been sought out as a valued ally to deliver the business community in support of needed policies and administrative actions and likewise ASBN mobilized our business community to advance our key policy objectives.

In the past year, we have held productive meetings with the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, and Labor, the Small Business Administration, Securities and Exchange Commission, National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Council on Environmental Quality and White House Office of Public Engagement.





## Protecting Democracy

The state-based assault on voting rights continued in 2021 with more than 300 bills in dozens of states introduced to put up barriers to silence our fellow Americans' voices, especially the voices of Black, Brown, young, disabled, and working-class voters. ASBN worked to support federal and state efforts to protect voting rights because our economy relies on a functioning democracy which is predicated on voter access and participation. ASBN was highly engaged in mobilizing businesses to protect voting rights. In support of the For the People Act, which was passed in March by the U.S. House of Representatives, ASBN organized a successful sign-on campaign generating more than 200 letters to policymakers.

Our initial goals to work on advocating for an Election Day National Holiday and passing federal same day voter registration were subsumed initially by For the People, which then stalled in the Senate after its House passage, which then developed a compromise measure, Freedom to Vote. Same day registration, election day holiday, tighter restrictions on campaign finance, and other measures to make it easier to vote are all included in Freedom to Vote.

ASBN organized the [Business for Democracy](#) working group to better enable collective action and advocacy on behalf of For the People and now Freedom to Vote. We also created the business case for democracy and voting rights, crafted several op-eds, and have spoken at rallies in support of voting rights.

But by June many Republican Senators were still refusing to let the Freedom to Vote bill be discussed on the Senate floor. ASBN was the first business group to call for the Senate to amend the filibuster rule, specifically to allow debate about federal voting rights legislation, after which other organizations followed. Amending the filibuster would have been a start to the solution to create a more just and sustainable economy and even democracy but it faced continued strong opposition.

We launched a new campaign [garnering business and investor support](#) for reforming Senate filibuster rules to permit a simple majority to pass Constitutional issues like voting rights or at least lowering the currently required 60-vote threshold to end a filibuster on such issues.

We pursued a multi-pronged strategy for bringing attention to the growing concern of the filibuster, which had prevented passage of crucial legislation that we have also prioritized in 2021. Simultaneously moving on prioritized pieces of legislation and working on filibuster reform allowed us to remain vigilant not only on policy solutions but on policy process as well.

We organized multiple sign-on letters with 100+ businesses signing on to support [For the People, Freedom to Vote and the John Lewis Voting Advancement acts](#). ASBN also joined the [Declaration for American Democracy](#) coalition and helped recruit more than 100+ businesses willing to publicly declare support for the DfAD corporate pledge.

Among the strategies employed to advance progress, ASBN sought out speaking opportunities. One example includes a rally on August 5 in Lebanon, NH at which ASBN executive vice president Thomas Oppel spoke. The rally and similar events showed business support of the voting rights legislation and how it would positively impact Americans and the economy.



On August 24, the house passed the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. This was a huge step forward as it would defend our most basic right in our democracy, voting. The right to vote has been under attack in many states since the 1965 Voting Rights Act was gutted by two recent Supreme Court decisions. During this time ASBN was still calling and urging people to contact their Senators in order to amend the filibuster.

In September, ASBN, along with our allies had the privilege of holding a [webinar](#) with Majority Whip James E. Clyburn. This was in the form of an open discussion between business leaders and Representative Clyburn.

On October 20, the Freedom to Vote Act was put to a vote by the Senate, but disappointingly, not a single Republican voted for it. Due to this the Act could not even be brought up for debate. ASBN along with many other business leaders again called for a filibuster carveout in order for debate to take place about the Freedom to Vote Act. The Freedom to Vote Act still has not passed by year's end, but we remain hopeful in the coming year that the right decision will be made.



**“The right to vote is the cornerstone of democracy and the foundation upon which all other rights are built.”**  
—Rep. James Clyburn, 2021





# Standing Up for America's Values

Following the assault on our democracy and nation's capital on January 6, ASBN put out a statement urging those who were involved to be held accountable for their acts of domestic terrorism. While the assaulting rioters were still outside, inside the capital some members of Congress were challenging a fair and just election, which is also a threat to democracy.

After these events, we as business leaders and citizens stood together in order to rebuild a more just and equitable society. Through our engagement with legislators at the state and national level, our work to get our business leaders' voices heard in the media and much more, we continue to fight for our democracy. This assault showed us how important and necessary it is for business leaders to stand up for democracy.







## Advancing the High Road Economy

**O**n April 15, ASBN announced that the membership of Barclays (which had been an SVC member) had been terminated and dues refunded based on their involvement in an Alabama prison financing deal because it was inconsistent with our vision for a just and sustainable economy. Many business leaders and investors stood behind us in this decision which led to Barclays dropping the deal. ASBN along with many other business leaders, investors, and social justice advocates urged other global investors to refuse to purchase the \$630 million taxable municipal bond that the Alabama Department of Corrections was offering. ASBN released a [statement](#) in support of the Barclays decision, including many comments of support from members and coalition partners. These events were covered extensively by leading media outlets, including [Bloomberg](#) and [Banking Dive](#).



ASBN also conveyed this vision of a High Road Economy when we voiced support for the Protect the Right to Organize Act (PRO Act) in order to create an economy where all stakeholders can thrive, whether it be employees, businesses, and/or the community at large. We created a sign-on letter in support of the PRO Act and our president published a compelling [op-ed](#) in The Hill. When employees and employers are able to work together it creates a more beneficial opportunity for both.

On the issue of livable wages, on September 22 Thomas Oppel, ASBN's executive vice president, was featured in Pennsylvania business publication [City & State PA](#) as he discussed the need for an increase to the minimum wage and how it will benefit employers and workers. Oppel explained that CEOs and other business leaders have seen wages grow consistently while hourly worker pay has remained stagnant for years, which is not sustainable for workers or the economy.

Similarly, in support of the American Jobs Plan, ASBN co-authored a [Baltimore Sun op-ed](#) making the case for additional needed support for small businesses. This op-ed was mentioned in a White House [press release](#) in June where ASBN was noticed for its advocacy for the American Jobs Plan. And ASBN board members Frank Knapp, Jr. and Derek Peebles wrote an [op-ed](#) in the Jacksonville Free Press urging Congress to support the Enhancing Entrepreneurship for the 21st Century Act. The Act calls for federal research into the reasons why the nation was at a 40-year low in new business startups.

To demonstrate ASBN's thought-leadership, our CEO published an article in Impact Entrepreneur (IE) magazine titled [Actions Speak Louder Than Words](#). In it, Jeffrey Hollender explains that when looking at necessary changes that need to be made for betterment and preservation of our society and the environment, many companies are all talk and do very little to actually change their behavior. Many corporations which profess their commitments do not always take actions that align with their commitments. Hollender also discussed the discrepancy between companies stating that they want to help fight climate change and then supporting political candidates that are not doing so.

ASBN also continued fighting for paid leave and medical leave, which are a necessity for every working person and contribute to economic prosperity. In 2021 ASBN expressed support through sign-on letters, webinars, and tweetstorms to get the attention of policymakers. ASBN was also the first and only business



organization actively supporting Paid Family Leave at the time. While this was originally part of the \$3.5 trillion reconciliation package dubbed the Build Back Better Act, it evolved to become part of the IIJA in part thanks to support from ASBN and our members and partners.

Recognizing our work, on September 27 ASBN was mentioned in a White House [press release](#) where they acknowledged ASBN, E2 (Environment Entrepreneurs), and Clean Energy for America (CE4A) and the work we did in supporting the Build Back Better Agenda and Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal that would tackle the climate crisis, create more jobs, and grow the economy. ASBN along with these other organizations created sign-ons where we gained a collective of over 1,000 signatures in support of Build Back Better and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal. Later in the month ASBN was again mentioned in a White House [press release](#) restating our efforts to support the Build Back Better Agenda and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal with our sing-ons.





## Priorities and Progress on Climate and Energy

Factors including increasing climate-driven pressures and extreme weather events, new and continued efforts to industrialize lands and waters, and struggling resource-dependent communities demand that our country set a new course for ocean and land conservation governance and climate action. The challenges are complex and urgent; therefore, the solutions must be innovative, comprehensive, and locally-driven, with Indigenous leadership at the forefront. In 2021 ASBN took action with partners to build Businesses for Conservation and Climate Action (BCCA).

With the release of the Administration's 30 x 30 – America the Beautiful plan, which we applaud, we stepped up to create a path forward for both conservation and a just economy. We created BCCA to establish policies that recognize sustainable, small, community-based and indigenous businesses and their local economies as compatible with healthy lands and oceans. This work is guided by a firm commitment to social equity, local and traditional wisdom, and triple bottom line solutions that restore social, ecological, and economic health.

We built this initiative from the ground up and now have a robust team led by Indigenous and community-based leadership and have been able to develop major engagement with the Administration, and secure media attention of our policy recommendations.

Some of our recent work includes meetings with the Department of Interior, NOAA, and Council on Environmental Quality where we have shared our priorities to help shape the America the Beautiful program. We have already seen evidence of the Administration adopting some of our framework and supporting some of our priorities. Some of the issues that BCCA is supporting include advancing our steering committee member, the Aleut Community of St. Paul Tribal Government, in efforts on the National Marine Sanctuary System expansion in the Bering Sea. We have also been supporting the continued effort to protect Bristol Bay from Pebble Mine, advancing Indigenous strategies on Prairie lands led by Rosebud Sioux Economic Development Corporation and others and working with Native Conservancy to advance Native led kelp enterprises. These efforts work to ensure



that conservation and just economy are both addressed. And we have engaged some of our state leaders on the national monuments' efforts within their regions.

Examples of BCCA media coverage include:

- Public News Service: Ocean-Protection Goals Build on Conservation Efforts by Alaska Fishermen.
- Public News Service: Fishing to Play Key Role in Next Decade of Conservation Efforts.
  - LATimes: Biden administration looks to triple the amount of protected land in the U.S. - Federal plans would complement California's initiative to conserve 30% of land and 30% of coastal waters by the end of the decade.
  - Washington Post: A narrow path for Biden's ambitious land conservation plan - New "America the Beautiful" report offers few specifics on how to protect 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030
  - SeafoodSource by Brian Hagenbuch: Businesses call for long-term salmon protections in Bristol Bay, Alaska

Moving forward, our 30x30 campaign will help secure a positive climate future. . We all must have a collective vision where we look at our connections with nature in order to find solutions that will benefit both humans and the world around us.

In January 2021 ASBN celebrated the long-awaited victory of the Clean Power Plan (CPP). In 2019, the Trump administration changed the CPP to the Affordable Clean Energy rule (ACE) that would save carbon dioxide emissions by 11 million tons by 2030 as opposed to CPP's more sustainable goal of 415 million tons by 2030 (both compared to taking no action). Many environmental groups challenged the ACE rule and in 2021 federal officials agreed with ASBN and environmental experts.

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## Regenerative Agriculture & Justice

In 2021 ASBN continued to expand the scope and influence of its [Regenerative Agriculture and Justice initiative](#) and [working group](#). This is a cross-sector business and investor initiative in cooperation with other stakeholders to advance the business case and public policies to create a more regenerative and equitable agricultural system. At the beginning of the year, the working group developed and voted to approve [joint principles](#) to guide the group's policy actions and which all members are required to sign on to.

In April, the working group collaborated to develop shared recommendations in response to the USDA's request for comments on addressing the climate crisis. We circulated this comment as a [sign-on letter](#) which received about 250 signatories from businesses, farmers, sustainable and family farm groups, environmental groups, and other advocacy organizations. Through our engagement with the USDA and the Biden Administration, we have helped ensure the agency has implemented several of our recommendations such as the following: financial support for supply chain resiliency and diversification towards local markets, regulatory action to support producers in the face of monopolies in meat supply chains (see [here](#)), investing in improving equity in conservation and climate-smart

agriculture programs (see [here](#) and [here](#)), and providing funding to stem property loss, particularly among Black farmers, through addressing issues of heirs' property (see [here](#)).

Our working group also collaborated to develop a set of [priorities](#) for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Package and Build Back Better Act. We advocated for these recommendations during the summer months of 2021 through an [action alert campaign](#), virtual fly-in events, and other engagements with Congress.

As the Build Back Better Act took shape in the Fall, we were pleased to continue to see that many of our funding priorities were in part included in the bill. We organized an action alert campaign to (1) ensure this funding remained as sections were being cut from the bill package, and (2) restrict concentrated animal feeding operations from accessing the new funding so more funding was available from farmers implementing soil health practices. This action alert resulted in over 3,000 messages sent to key congressional staff and [will remain active](#) until the agriculture funding in the BBBA passes Congress.

Additionally, ASBN was invited by leaders in Mexico to support the government's efforts to end the use of the highly dangerous pesticide glyphosate and prohibit the growing and import of genetically modified corn. ASBN voiced its concern to the USDA regarding the agency's attempt to influence Mexican courts to overturn these efforts. Agriculture Secretary Vilsak acknowledged ASBN's concern, writing to ASBN, "The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is likewise committed to building food and agricultural systems that are resilient and sustainable. Science-based policies are foundational to USDA's pursuit of that goal here at home and in its engagement with Mexico and other countries." The Supreme Court of Mexico ultimately allowed for the bans to proceed, and we applaud the heroic efforts of our allies in Mexico.

In April, David Levine, ASBN's president, was quoted in a [press release](#) from Senator Cory Booker in which Levine discusses ASBN's support in the Climate Stewardship Act that was being reintroduced by Senator Booker and Congresswoman Spanberger and cosponsored by Senator Gillibrand. This would focus on investing in farm conservation programs, reforestation, and wetlands restoration. This would call for the federal government to support a transition towards regenerative agriculture. This will help farmers to adopting soil health and other practices that will combat climate change, increase farmer's incomes and working conditions, build more resilient supply chains, and grow our economy.

In March, ASBN was listed as a supporter for the Water Quality Protection and Job Creation Act of 2021. This would provide assistance for construction, repair, and replacement for the networks of wastewater and stormwater treatment facilities. We fully support this bipartisan legislation that will not only help with wastewater treatment but will also provide funding to help the drought conditions in the West. ASBN is proud to be among many other great organizations supporting this Act.

In November, Michael Green, ASBN's climate and energy working group chair, attended COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, along with a small delegation of ASBN members. Many issues were touched upon in hopes of agreeing on the next steps that need to be taken to limit warming to 1.5C. President Biden opened COP26 announcing the push for a global commitment to cut methane emissions by at least 30% by 2030. This commitment received more than 100 signatures from governments all over the world. Many steps taken at COP26 were in the right direction toward a more just and sustainable economy and Green reported throughout the visit to keep ASBN members informed about proceedings.

In December ASBN issued a laudatory [statement](#) in support of the Biden administration's executive order to cut emissions by the U.S. Government and expand electrification. The federal administrative actions taken re-establish the federal government as a leader in sustainability and will help to transform Federal procurement and operations to secure a transition to clean, zero-emission technologies. This is expected to result in a carbon pollution-free electricity sector by 2035, and a net-zero emissions economy-wide by 2050.

ASBN was mentioned in April by a [press release](#) from Senator Chris Coons as he explained the reintroduction of the bipartisan bill to drive investments in energy security and innovation. This was reintroduced by Senators Coons, Graham, and Luján. ASBN showed our support for the creation of the Foundation for Energy Security Innovation (FESI) that was proposed. This bill would help in the need for the federal government to work in supporting and attracting private investments into the clean energy sector. We applaud the efforts for non-partisan partnerships especially in the hopes of achieving net-zero goals.



## Moving to a Circular Economy

**W**e have made plastics, waste, toxic chemicals, and driving towards a circular economy a core campaign for ASBN. As with most of our larger campaigns, the organizing structure follows the ASBN model of building working groups to build an alliance of diverse leadership, coordinate the development of common principles, and joint strategies that then lead to coordinated collaborative advocacy. Our focus for 2021 was on the [Break Free From Plastic Pollution Coalition](#), both at the federal level as well as focusing on the state level with recycling and Extended Producer Responsibility bills. This act would ban single use plastics; make designers of packaging design, manage and finance waste and recycling programs; establish minimum recycled content requirements for beverage, food-service products, and packaging; invest in domestic recycling and compost infrastructure, along with many other necessary changes. We increased our influence by becoming a full core member of Break Free from Plastic Pollution Coalition – the lone strictly business organization with that status by joining the core coalition, as well



as participating in both their federal and state policy strategy development and advocacy efforts. We were able to provide a business voice during the reintroduction of Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act (BFFPPA), and our activities included sign on letters to support the bill, media events, and outreach to policy makers securing co-sponsorship.

We also provided assistance in mobilizing businesses in targeted California legislative districts in support of passage of “truth in recycling” bill, CA SB 343, signed into law October 5, 2021, and continue to forge ahead on national bottle bill legislation, as a breakout from BFFPPA.

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## Safer Chemicals & Products

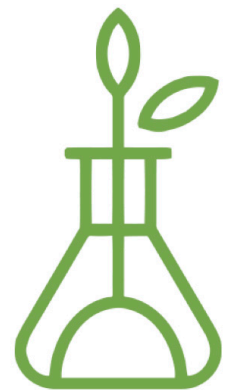
2021 marked the one-year anniversary of the Childhood Cancer Prevention Initiative (CCPI) that ASBN had launched with ASBN board member Anne Robertson and is now partnered with Cancer Free Economy Network, Children’s Environmental Health Network, Prep4Gold, Clean & Healthy New York and others.

This year the groups analyzed and reaffirmed the information in the [Report](#) linking environmental causes to childhood cancer. During the anniversary week ASBN held six webinars that had a variety of expert speakers, ranging from scientists to advocates. CCPI released an [addendum](#) to the report with new and updated statistics and information since the original publication during the previous year. Mother Jones published an extensive [article](#) about pediatric cancer in a search to answer why it is the leading cause of death and cites research contributed by ASBN from CCPI.

We identified pesticides as one of the key contributors to childhood cancer. In November, ASBN shared a [media release](#) endorsing the Protect America’s Children from Toxic Pesticides Act that was introduced by Senator Booker. This Act would amend the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) with the aim of protecting the safety of children, workers, and the environment, to remove dangerous pesticides from use in the country.

In December, David Levine, ASBN’s president, was quoted in a [press release](#) from Senator Chris Coons in which Levine expressed ASBN’s support of the Sustainable Chemistry Research and Development Act. This will provide a model for how we can create a transition to safer chemicals, especially as business and job opportunities grow. This will benefit our health, economy, and our country and we applaud the bipartisan bill.

Thank you to ECOS and Naturepedic for their support of our safer chemicals campaigns.



## Environment, Social, & Governance (ESG)

In June, ASBN was listed as a supporter of the Governance Improvement and Investor Protection Legislative Package, with the lead bill HR 1187, the ESG Disclosure Simplification Act of 2021. This bill would require the SEC to have a standard definition of ESG metrics, and also require standardized ESG disclosures. ESG covers climate change, social issues, and governance issues which are all topics that should not be taken lightly and need a standard in order to create a safe environment for all workers and everyone involved.

On October 13, the Department of Labor made the decision to permit consideration of ESG as an investment criterion. This would make it so that climate change and other environmental factors would be considered when considering investments and exercising shareholder rights. ASBN applauded and made a [statement in support](#) of this decision made by President Biden and the DOL. Previously, ASBN created multiple sign-on letters, resulting in over 350 signatures, through which businesses voiced their support for the consideration of ESG criteria. ESG is starting to shape the future of businesses and the economy, and for the economy to keep growing in a more just and sustainable manner we need to take ESG factors measured and accounted for.



ASBN was an early supporter of and contributor of ideas to what became the \$3.5 trillion Bipartisan Infrastructure bill, later becoming the \$1.7 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). This bill, which was finally passed by the House and Senate, provides improvements to highways, transit systems, and much more. Among the topics for which ASBN advocated which are now funded include: major investments in clean energy transmission and EV infrastructure; electrification of buses; building a resilient, clean, 21st century electric grid to help combat climate change; expanding broadband to ensure every American has access to reliable high-speed internet and close

the digital divide; securing clean water with the replacement of lead pipes; and repairing of crumbling roads and bridges. These are backbones of our economy.

ASBN was a lead organizer of a journalist briefing in which business leaders made the case for large-scale infrastructure investments. Following the press briefing, [Politico](#) concluded that the Business Roundtable [and Chamber of Commerce] are not “the only game in town,” noting the strong support by American businesses for investments to mitigate and avert climate change. The article also pointed to a White House [press release](#) citing ASBN’s organizing to mobilize more than 1,000 businesses to voice support for needed infrastructure investments.



To generate this support, ASBN created a dedicated advertising campaign to encourage businesses in key geographies to sign-on to tell their Senate representatives about the importance of infrastructure investments. Messaging was simple: There are no jobs or businesses on a dead planet.



In November, we applauded the President’s signing of IIJA, and ASBN’s CEO and co-founder, Jeffrey Hollender had the honor of attending the signing at the invitation by the White House. ASBN was at the forefront of fighting for this needed investment and to see it all come together after everything it had been through was truly remarkable.

The Build Back Better Act was also a priority for ASBN and building support for its passage included ASBN creating a Build Back Better support campaign which allowed American businesses to voice their support on the matter. Our campaign was recognized by the White House in a press release. Throughout this campaign, and even after with our sign-on letters, we showed a collective front to government leaders and also to the business community. On November 19, the Build Back Better Act was passed by the House, but then stalled in the Senate. We continue to advocate for it, in particular the paid leave provisions. As the year came to a close, we were still waiting for the Senate to proceed.

Jeffrey Hollender, ASBN’s CEO, was quoted in a [press release](#) by Congresswoman Barbara Lee in April. The press release talked about the Tax on Wall Street Speculation Act to Curb Green introduced by Representative Lee and Senator Sanders. Hollender shared ASBN’s support of the re-introduction of this bill, explaining that financial transactions be held to the same standard as any other marketplace transactions.





## Business & COVID-19

As the world, and our nation, faced continued uncertain times due to COVID-19, businesses needed to re-think about the well-being of their employees, customers, and their businesses as a whole. The support available from the federal government via the CARES Act was intended as a down payment to help small businesses survive, but even that down payment wasn't getting to where it was needed fast enough so ASBN continued mobilization efforts to call for a comprehensive healthcare strategy, funding the Small Business Administration's Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) Advance program to provide economic support for small businesses, increase the Payroll Protection Program, and other programs. We worked collaboratively with the American Independent Business Alliance (AMIBA) and other business organizations on this initiative which included sign-on letters to Senators and Representatives.

ASBN also put people first when on August 3 we announced our call for mandatory vaccinations for all eligible American workers to keep people in their workplaces safe including ASBN employees, and support business re-openings. And ASBN published an [op-ed in Triple Pundit](#) making the business case for putting safety first.

Our report *State & Local Recommendations for Reopening the Economy* which provide a wide range of policy and other action steps to rebuild economies, continued to be utilized by municipal and state leaders across the country.

And in the beginning of December, ASBN held our first in-person conference since COVID and the first one as a new organization. Attendance in San Diego was very strong driven by an inspiring agenda that included provocative speakers, informational workshops, and group activities, with plenty of time for informal networking, mostly outdoors. We knew that our employees and the participants' safety must come first when planning this event. We took many safety precautions and created a protocol that made sense for the event and for the safety of everyone involved.



## State Affiliates' Accomplishments

Over the last year, ASBN has continued to build out its infrastructure and reach by helping to build several new state organizations including the [Texas Sustainable Business Network](#), and [Sustainable Equitable Economic Democracy of New Mexico \(SEED-NM\)](#). We are also convening leaders in Maine which are preparing to launch a Maine Sustainable Business Network.

ASBN has been able to continue to support campaigns by our existing state organizations including the [New Jersey Sustainable Business Council's](#) work to advance electric vehicles, wind power as well as its efforts, [Ohio Sustainable Business Council's](#) work to create a state bank to build local economy, the [New York Sustainable Business Council's](#) victories in passing numerous saver chemicals bills and comprehensive climate legislation as well as our work to advance plastics, safer cosmetics and worker ownership legislation in California. Below are some highlights of a few of our state affiliates.

### Small Business Chamber of Commerce

In 2021 the [SC Small Business Chamber of Commerce \(SCSBCC\)](#) led efforts to help SC small businesses and those across the nation on issues of concern. SCSBCC provided outreach to SC small business owners to inform them of affordable health insurance for themselves and their employees via the federal marketplace. In conjunction with the ASBN, the SCSBCC launched and led a national business coalition which made recommendations for addressing the nation's 40-year low in new business startups including more access to capital. Several of the recommendations of the "Reform the SBA: BIGGER Mission, Authority and Resources" campaign was included in the US House passed Build Back Better Act. SCSBCC partnered with American Business Immigration Coalition to call for immigration reform to address the nation's labor shortage by allowing more immigrants to enter the country legally and providing permanent legal status to Dreamers, migrant farm workers and Temporary Protected Status immigrants. SCSBCC also led a national small business effort, which included ASBN, calling on Congress to pass voting rights legislation. Lastly, SCSBCC intervened in SC Public Service Commission hearings resulting in 85% reduction in Dominion Energy rate hike request and protecting roof-top solar customer savings.

## Connecticut Sustainable Business Council

2021 was a busy year for the [Connecticut Sustainable Business Council \(CTSBC\)](#) with the expansion of its programs such as the Women In Sustainability Roundtable, a networking and educational opportunity for “women working in sustainability to listen, learn and support so we all get better at what we do.”

Another new program was its Climate and Energy Peer Exchange, which brings business leaders together to share experiences and information in a way that leverages collective wisdom and experiences to provide business participants with tangible, tried-and-true ways to meet their climate change related goals and advance sustainability within their organizations.

CTSBC’S 2022 flagship program is an innovative partnership with The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut to create an initiative called CT Energy Future, which seeks to convene businesses in the development of a set of policy principles that support scaling clean energy in the state. CTSBC’s role has been to identify, recruit, convene and facilitate listening sessions between the business community and The Nature Conservancy to work toward a common goal of developing principles we can all get behind.

## North Carolina Business Council

In 2021, [NCBC](#) created opportunities for its members to make the business case on several critical policy issues that NC and the country are facing. From Redistricting, Healthcare, and Climate to Diversity & Inclusion and Small Business Development, NCBC has been at the forefront of moving these issues forward to help create an equitable economy.

Additionally, through its e-newsletters, NCBC has helped hundreds of businesses access financial resources needed to endure the COVID-19 economic crisis. While doing so, they continued to provide relative information to help companies implement sustainable business practices that address their “triple-bottom-line:” People. Planet. Profit.

Together with its business network and community partners, NCBC has been able to achieve some important milestones. Here are just a few:

- Partnered with community business organizations to build a coalition of more than 400 companies to advocate for small business initiatives and healthcare expansion.
- Successfully advocated to have billions of dollars allocated in the state budget for small business grants, loan funds and development grant programs.
- Amplified the business voice on issues relating to climate, clean energy, and clean water. This effort resulted in securing \$300 million in the state budget to address environmental resiliency, and getting dozens of NC businesses to join more than 400 global companies to support steps to reduce climate pollution in half by 2030.
- Shared dozens of signed letters and hosted at least five business roundtables with state representatives and congressional members.
- Told the stories of businesses affected by lack of affordable healthcare for their workers, resulting in a news article featured in hundreds of media outlets.
- Grew business engagement in the 2020 Census Count which helped to achieve a 64 percent Census report rate and earned NC an additional congressional seat.



## New York Sustainable Business Council

In 2021, the [New York Sustainable Business Council \(NYSBC\)](#) grew in staff and influence, forged strategic partnerships, and celebrated nation-leading policy wins. NYSBC added three new members to its Steering Committee, hired its first Deputy Director, and is now onboarding its first Communications Coordinator.

NYSBC engaged with New York's new governor Katheen Hochul on shared priorities. NYSBC was sure to bring the voice of the small, independent, and local businesses that were most impacted by the pandemic, as Governor Hochul and her team assumed responsibility for New York's economic recovery.



NYSBC is grateful to the dozens of business leaders who provided testimonials, signed onto actions, or attended meetings with policy makers on a wide range of issues. Together, we can celebrate groundbreaking wins including a complete ban on fracking across the entire Delaware River Watershed spanning roughly 13,500 square miles across four states. This is our nation's first multi-state fracking ban!

2021 collective efforts also resulted in the following wins:

- The establishment of a Soil Health Initiative, a Climate Resilient Farming Initiative, and a Research Initiative that stands to improve water quality and also increase carbon sequestration to help the state meet its climate goals.
  - Testing for 40 emerging contaminants in our drinking water including PFAS.
  - A ban on specific flame retardants in furniture and other household items where the chemicals have been ineffective and toxic to consumers and fire fighters.
  - Elimination of single-use plastic bottles of personal care products in hotels.
  - Increased safety standards for government contracted industrial paint removal.
  - Much stronger standards for the testing and mitigation of lead in school drinking water

There have also been incremental wins on other important efforts, and NYSBC will continue those fights in 2022.

As the network of ASBN state affiliates continues to grow, we will work to support state efforts across the country, and build those alliance into regional efforts as we also build our multi-state national initiatives.

# ASBN's Principles

## **JEDI Lens**

We acknowledge the historic and systemic barriers to capital and opportunity for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian communities, women, and gender nonconforming as a significant barrier to our collective mission. Our work requires that we place an urgent and immediate focus on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI).

## **Inclusive, Accessible, & Just Economy**

We believe in a fully participatory economy, that all people must be able to access the goods, services and resources supplied by the economy by way of just labor, consumer, financial and producer markets. A just and inclusive economy must be supported by strong public policy regulatory guidance and guardrails, and a strong democracy.

## **Regenerative Approach**

We recognize that environmental and social stewardship is not enough and that in order to have equitable and just access to the resources we all depend on, that our solutions must prioritize regeneration for all people and the planet

## **Just Economic & Social Prosperity**

We advocate for regenerative, restorative and reparative solutions throughout the business and investor movement that ASBN leads. We believe that a thriving and vibrant business landscape and economic system is only durable and long-term if it prioritizes justice-informed access to resources, capital, opportunity and community for all.

## **Stakeholder Participation in Decision Making**

All of the solutions we advocate for, from investment terms to governance to risk assessment and beyond, are best served when co-created by all stakeholder groups having full and participatory access to decision making.

## **Transparency & Accountability**

We prioritize implementing and supporting transparency and accountability, both as an internal standard, and as a democratic public policy and economic imperative for policy makers, businesses and investors.

## **Systemic Change**

We believe that our economy and society are highly complex, dynamic and distributed systems, requiring both bold leadership and long term planning in order to achieve the systemic change we need to see.



*Business for a  
Just &  
Sustainable  
Economy*

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