Accomplishments in 2015
Boosting the Voice and Power of Business for a Sustainable Economy

Throughout 2015, American Sustainable Business Council (ASBC) and American Sustainable Business Institute (ASBI) continued to help business leaders, policymakers and the media understand the critical need and opportunity for a more sustainable economy. We recommended and advocated for the practical steps policymakers can take to support such an economy by enacting better laws and smarter regulations. From shifting the stereotypical narrative of business versus community, to changing specific government policies and business practices, ASBC impacted the thinking and actions of policymakers and the broader private sector.

Highlights of 2015:

Our 4th Annual Sustainable Business Summit, held in September in the nation’s capital, brought together several hundred corporate executives and state and federal policymakers to share ideas on policies that reward responsible business practices, advance clean energy and build a sustainable economy. Our Annual “SUSTY” (Sustainable Policy-makers) Award was presented to U.S. Senator Chris Coons (DE); Dan Utech, Senior Advisor to the President on Climate Change; and John Replogle, CEO, Seventh Generation.

Our “High Road Business” project made the case for a range of impactful public policies and business strategies to encourage greater shared prosperity. Through congressional testimony, placement of op-eds and high-profile events involving the U.S. Dept. of Labor and White House, we worked to pass paid leave and family medical leave legislation; support overtime protections and worker ownership; and encouraged increased procurement of sustainable, safer products.

Our “Clean Water is Good for Business” campaign brought urgently needed attention to the damage industrially contaminated water supplies have caused to local property values, retail business operations and next-generation workforce productivity.

In 2015, ASBI empowered our members with timely education on issues to make the business case for sustainability. We developed pragmatic new policies, case studies, and informational materials and provided public relations support for a variety of important campaigns. We provided testimony to legislative bodies, worked synergistically with our member and allied organizations, helped build relationships between business leaders and legislators, and brought problem-solving opportunities to government leaders and the public.

Throughout the year, we provided credibility, cover, and a reputable platform for policymakers to speak about the growing trend of business support for policies that encourage economic, social and environmental benefits.
Building High-Level Engagement

ASBC and ASBI fill a crucial niche in the national dialogue, bringing the views of values-based businesses to the attention of policymakers. In 2015, ASBC and our members made more than 200 lobbying visits to Capitol Hill. We also held numerous meetings on food policy, climate change, minimum wage, water quality, tax reform, “ban the box” and other issues with White House officials and senior department staff.

Among our achievements with policymakers:

• ASBC and ASBI were cited by Congressional committee members and on the floor of the House and Senate on the Toxic Substances Control Act, regulatory reform, climate change and access to capital.
• ASBC members Eileen Fisher, Inc. and Dansko presented before the House Democratic Whip Leadership meeting.
• Representatives Judy Chu (CA) and Janice Hahn (CA) referenced ASBC’s position on the Microloan Modernization Act recommending much-needed changes to the SBA program.
• Senator Barbara Boxer (CA) cited an ASBC letter and polling numbers in the floor debate on overturning the Clean Power Plan.
• ASBI’s Companies for Safer Chemicals group leaders spent two days advocating for Toxic Substances Control Act reform, with 20+ participants visiting 24 Hill offices, including eight senators.
• ASBC member Andrew Lemley, New Belgium Brewing; testified on Capitol Hill against the Senator Barrasso (WY) bill designed to kill EPA’s “Waters of the U.S.” rule.
• William Scott, CEO of Tristatz in Selma, AL; of ASBC organizational member Emerging Changemakers, testified about regulations being good for minority-owned businesses at a Senate Judiciary subcommittee hearing chaired by Senator Ted Cruz (TX).
• Frank Knapp, Chair/CEO of ASBC organizational member South Carolina Small Business Chamber of Commerce, testified at an EPA Hearing on the Clean Power Plan.
• ASBC’s CEO David Levine testified to concerns about the TPP at a hearing hosted by Representatives Keith Ellison (MN) and Rick Nolan (MN) and also presented before the Senate Democratic Caucus on the High Road Business model.

Providing Authoritative Information

To aid fruitful discussion, ASBC issued reports and papers and presented webinars on important legislative topics. For example:

• For the U.S. Department of Labor, we drafted a paper on emerging trends in workplace practices in support of an October “Future of Work” Summit at the White House.
• We presented webinars with U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (RI) on carbon tax; with Karen Florino of the U.S. State Department on the Paris Climate Summit; and with Ken Kopacis, EPA, on water issues.
• Making the Business & Economic Case for Safer Chemistry, a report commissioned by ASBC with the Green Chemistry and Commerce Council and developed by independent research firm Trucost, found a substantially higher market growth potential for safer chemicals than their conventional counterparts.
• Our report, The Business Case for Rethinking Fracking, highlighted the many ill effects associated with the practice of hydraulic fracturing.
• ASBC’s Divest/Invest Primer provided support to the New York State Comptroller and the Mayor’s Innovation Project to explore alternative investment approaches.

“To keep the economy growing, we need policies that help workers and communities thrive. The work the American Sustainable Business Council is doing to build an economy that works for everyone is so important and vital to our country.”

– U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand | D-NY
Making a Proven Impact

By coalescing a critical mass of corporate leaders willing to make the business case for a sustainable economy, ASBC is impacting policies and laws at the local, state and national levels. We have directly helped to pass good laws and block harmful ones. Among our achievements in 2015:

• ASBC and our organizational member Green America mobilized businesses in successful opposition to the Keystone XL pipeline.
• ASBC opposed a May 2014 FCC plan to let AT&T, Comcast and Verizon create pay-to-play fast lanes. We delivered business leaders to speak at hearings and public forums in support of Net Neutrality, which was upheld by the FCC.
• Senator Barbara Boxer (CA) cited a letter on TSCA reform from ASBC and our Companies for Safer Chemicals group at committee markup. ASBC was able to insert language in the bill that mandates greater product disclosure.
• ASBC pushed back legislative attempts to undermine EPA’s Safer Choice program when we delivered a letter with more than 100 signatures from businesses and organizations representing thousands more.
• ASBC brought together investors and business leaders with New York City’s Mayor’s Office of Pensions and Investments, encouraging the City to divest from coal and explore greater investment in renewable energy.
• ASBC’s High Road Business campaign has provided business leaders to help achieve victories for paid leave and family leave. With our organizational member Business for a Fair Minimum Wage, we have also helped achieve minimum wage increases around the country.
• ASBC member Patagonia was honored by the White House as a “Champion for Change” for its workplace practices.

Building Nation-Wide Capacity

ASBC achieved an extraordinary 40% increase in membership in 2015. With our extended member network, we now represent more than 225,000 businesses, with Hackensack Medical Center, The Honest Company, MCS Industries, Dr. Bronner’s, and Durst among our high-profile new members. (See our current list of business members.) We also added new organizational members.

Expanding our State Presence

Recruiting and mobilizing local, state and sector-based organizational members supports our overall strategy. These members give us access to elected officials for in-district meetings, thereby reinforcing our efforts in Washington. Through our organizational members, we also help shape local and state policy debates by providing well-prepared business leaders to engage through our diverse strategies.
Making Progress, State by State

- We have successfully recruited organizational and corporate ASBC members by working with existing groups in 40 states.
- We have expanded ASBC’s influence by helping to build new business organizations in Connecticut, Kentucky, North Carolina, New York, Ohio and West Virginia.
- Our **New York** State Sustainable Business Council organized Businesses Against Fracking, engaging over 1,500 business leaders, which contributed to New York’s decision to ban fracking and turn to renewable energy.
- With our **Kentucky** Sustainable Business Council, we networked business leaders with elected officials through the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators to advance a carbon-pricing initiative.
- The **North Carolina** Business Council worked to lift up business voices for a Livable Wage.
- In **Ohio**, we helped the state-level Sustainable Business Council to build support for our clean water campaign.
- Our **West Virginia** Sustainable Business Council led efforts to pass SB352, paving the way for recycling and composting cooperatives.

Learning from Our Diverse Membership

Credible persuasion requires an acute grasp of the facts, so ASBC has also developed internal working groups that let ASBC members delve into specific issues and provide strategic counsel on how to effect change. Working groups hold regular conference calls and meetings, and serve as a brain trust for ASBC.

Two of these groups include:

- ASBC’s Working Group for Women ensures that the insights of women business owners, managers and employees are represented in our policy and advocacy work.
- ASBC’s Diversity and Inclusion Working Group ensuring that the views and values of minority Americans, particularly those from traditionally marginalized communities, are reflected in ASBC’s policy and advocacy work.

Case Study: The Companies for Safer Chemicals Campaign

The Companies for Safer Chemicals campaign seeks legislation that clearly identifies chemicals that are unsafe, takes harmful chemicals off the market without delay, provides incentives for producing safer chemicals and products, and promotes transparency throughout the supply chain. ASBC grew the Companies for Safer Chemicals (CSC) coalition from representing a few hundred companies to several thousand.

At the federal level, we focused mainly on the reform of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). At the state level, we campaigned to mobilize state level support for TSCA reform and to support additional policy change on a state-by-state basis. Our strategies included two highly successful lobby days in which 22 companies participated and 24 meetings were held with pivotal senators and Senate offices. ASBC developed training, talking points, case studies, polling and other material. To further support our position, ASBC drafted and sent two letters to the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) committee articulating concerns with the Senate legislation. ASBC staff organized 35 additional office visits to members of Congress and leadership offices to articulate the business case for meaningful reform.

ASBC’s efforts led to key improvements in the TSCA transparency provisions, notwithstanding problems that remain in the bill as a whole. Our federal efforts were lauded: Companies for Safer Chemicals and ASBC were cited by Ranking Member Barbara Boxer (CA) at an EPW committee meeting. Our business voice helped to advance safer chemicals efforts in New York, Connecticut, Minnesota, and Alaska. In Minnesota it supported passage of a flame retardants bill. In NY it led to the “Toxic-Free Toy Act” in three counties.
Changing the Conversation

Updating the stereotypical narrative on how business views sustainable economic practices is an uphill process. Stereotypes die hard, but ASBC is successfully providing a consistent opposing voice to conventional business lobbies on numerous issues. In representing the growing number of responsible American business owners, ASBC gives elected officials a more accurate view of where their business constituents stand, supports them in speaking out on key issues, and helps them perceive the erroneous claims by groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that argue they represent the views of all U.S. business owners.

Earning Broad, Credible Media Coverage

In 2015, ASBC issued 45 press releases on a range of issues, featuring business leaders from across the U.S. and representing many diverse business sectors. This resulted in more than 1,200 media mentions and more than one hundred million impressions.

Media outlets, including Reuters, Associated Press, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, Bloomberg, Businessweek, Politico, and The Hill regularly quote business leaders put forward by ASBC. Our media efforts have resulted in more than 130 original stories and many more impressions resulting from pick-up by syndicated services. In addition, many timely op-eds were placed in national and local newspapers and re-published around the country.

In total, more than 150 op-eds, columns and letters to the editor authored by the staff and members of ASBC were published in media outlets around the U.S.

Engaging and Deploying Our Members

Even skeptical policymakers and media pay attention when a sustainable economic best practice is described from real-world experience by a successful business leader. One of ASBC’s most important roles is bringing responsible businesses to wider public attention where they serve as inspiring, reassuring examples to their peers and national opinion-leaders.

Among the key leadership efforts by ASBC members in 2015:

• New Belgium Brewing hosted an event on water quality at its headquarters that involved Rep. Jared Polis, Senate staffers and the Regional EPA Water Director.
• The CEOs of Badger Balm and Pax World co-hosted an event in New Hampshire on the economic case for high road business practices.
• Seventh Generation, Earth Friendly Products, Naturepedic and other name-brand companies took leadership roles in advocating for safer chemical development and policies through ASBC’s Companies for Safer Chemicals group.
• In partnership with Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility, Clif Bar, Ben & Jerry’s, and Beanfield’s, ASBC helped the state Attorney General’s Office prepare its case to protect Vermont legislation on GMO labeling.

Accomplishments in 2015

“For decades, old-economy businesses have been the monolithic power pushing their agenda for our national policies, and as a result, our economy has been forced down a reckless path. The American Sustainable Business Council is the first organization to change that paradigm, giving a unified voice to businesses committed to a sustainable, resilient future.”

- Jeffrey Hollender
ASBC co-founder & chair; co-founder & former CEO of Seventh Generation

Advancing the Sustainability Agenda
ASBC used a variety of strategies to support measures with maximum impact in key areas both broad and narrow. Among our 2015 accomplishments:

On Climate, ASBC continued to provide a business campaign that offered a path forward for a clean energy economy as we provided a clear counter to the US Chamber of Commerce, the fossil fuel industry and their lobbyists. We mobilized our membership to sign on to numerous letters to Capitol Hill in support of the Clean Power Plan (CPP) and against efforts to undermine the rulemaking process. We hosted regional calls with EPA to inform business leaders on the CPP, and joined with ASBC member Climate Action Business Association to attend the UN’s Paris Climate Summit in December, 2015. ASBC also launched a national campaign to raise business awareness about the economic and environmental merits of a carbon tax, focusing on both state and federal efforts.

On Integrated Health Care, ASBC raised business awareness of Section 2706 of the Affordable Care Act in partnership with the Integrative HealthCare Policy Consortium. That effort resulted in a new partnership with another ASBC partner, Small Business Minnesota, in support of ongoing efforts to require that insurance companies cover complementary and alternative health-care treatment options.

On Access to Capital – a business necessity that is especially hard to get for firms that are new, small, innovative, or owned by women and minorities – ASBI works with the Small Business Administration to ensure that loans are equally accessible to businesses owned by women and people of color. We led a group of organizations, including Association of Enterprise Opportunity, in sending a letter to the House Committee on Small Business encouraging legislation that would streamline small business access to capital. ASBI also aggressively supported the crucial Microloan Modernization Act.

On Clean Water, ASBC continued to bring attention to the responsible business community’s support for the Clean Water Rule. As part of our national “Clean Water is Good for Business”, we published numerous op-eds; held events around the country including in Missouri, Kentucky, Illinois, and Ohio; and brought business leaders who support the Clean Water Rule to Capitol Hill. Our work drew national attention from policymakers and environmental organizations alike.

On Paid Sick Days and Family Medical Leave Insurance, ASBI worked closely with U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (NY) and members of the House to support passage of a national Family Medical Leave Insurance bill. While success was elusive at the federal level, ASBI and our organizational member, New York State Sustainable Business Council, were successful in passing the Paid Family Leave Insurance Act, which extended paid leave benefits to all workers in the state. We also worked closely with U.S. Senator Patty Murray (WA) on her Healthy Families Act, which would let workers to earn up to 56 hours of earned sick days.

“The American Sustainable Business Council is fighting for high road workplaces, which provide better conditions for workers, stronger communities and a healthier planet for our children. Their work proves that investing in environmental sustainability and paying workers well isn’t just the right thing to do, it’s also good business. That’s exactly what we need to make our economy work for everyone.”

- U.S. Representative Keith Ellison (D-MN)
Accomplishments in 2015

ASBC’s advocacy of high road business practices aided other 2015 breakthroughs in the broad area of leave. Among these were President Obama’s proposal of a $2 billion fund to help states develop paid family leave and medical leave programs, and presidential memoranda establishing the “right to request” flexible workplace arrangements for federal workers and directing agencies to provide up to six weeks of paid leave. The president’s well-publicized support spurred continued growth for the family medical leave campaign nationally. On the state level, ASBC members’ support aided establishment of earned sick leave and family or medical leave in New York, California, and Washington D.C.

On GMO Labeling, ASBC worked with member organizations and others to support common-sense GMO labeling and counter the “bad for business” narrative. We worked with Just Label It and Environmental Working Group to send a petition with more than 650 business signatures from 46 states to every Senate office, calling on senators to reject the Dark Act. We also worked with ASBC state-level partners in Vermont, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia; and provided ASBC’s Richard Eidlin to make the business case for GMO labeling on National Public Radio in Minnesota.

On Regulatory Reform, ASBC helped explain that good regulations, far from hampering success, create business opportunities, preserve market competition, streamline market access, and promote public confidence in business by protecting consumers, promoting transparency, and fostering secure opportunities for public-private partnerships. In 2015, ASBC issued letters to Congress on numerous harmful bills in Congress, including the REINS Act, SCRUB Act, and RFIA, all of which sought to restrict appropriate oversight of commercial activity.

On Tax, ASBC members helped carry the message that fair tax policies are essential for an economy to create good-paying jobs, promote ownership opportunities, and reduce the federal deficit. In our push for greater tax equity for small and mid-sized businesses, ASBC expanded our “Proud to Be an American Business” campaign that spotlights the growing problem of tax inversions, and our “End Offshore Tax Havens” campaign to level the playing field for all U.S. businesses.

On “Ban the Box” and other Fair Hiring policies, ASBC convened companies including Ben & Jerry’s, Busboys and Poets, Greyston Bakery and RecycleForce to make the business case for Ban the Box, a rule requiring employers to consider a job candidate’s qualifications first, deferring the request for background information until a conditional job offer is made. ASBC provided support to Congressional advocates seeking reform, as well as to the White House by producing op-eds and letters.

On the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement, ASBC initiated a campaign to raise business concerns about the TPP and to adopt a framework for trade agreements that would abide by principles of sustainability. Mobilizing business leaders at the national level and working with our members at the state level, ASBC provided business leaders to speak to the media, engaged with legislators, and provided speakers for public forums and webinars.

Strength in Sustainability

When ASBC was founded in 2009, political hopes were high and economic expectations low. Since then, the economy has begun to recover but the forces against rational, responsible policies have gained strength. The role of ASBC and our many members, allies and friends has proved a bulwark of community-sustaining good sense and stewardship. We give a powerful voice to successful businesses that practice sustainability. We give business leaders, policy makers, media and other concerned Americans the practical tools and tactics to make the case for economic and environmental sustainability. In a media environment of “us” vs. “them,” ASBC is both progressive and conservative in the best senses of those words. Every new business member that joins ASBC reaffirms the wisdom of sustainability, and strengthens the movement to achieve it.
ASBC Members

BUSINESS LEADER: COMPANIES CONTRIBUTING $10,000 OR MORE

Ben & Jerry’s | Bethpage Federal Credit Union | Clif Bar | Dr. Bronner’s | Durst Organization | Earth Friendly Products | Eileen Fisher | MCS Industries | Naturepedic | New Belgium Brewing | NRS, Inc. | Patagonia | Perlman & Perlman | Seventh Generation | The Honest Company

BUSINESSALLY: COMPANIES CONTRIBUTING $2,500 TO $9,999


BUSINESS SUPPORTER: COMPANIES CONTRIBUTING $250 TO $2,499


ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS OF AMERICAN SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS COUNCIL


For a complete list of members and membership benefits, please visit asbcouncil.org.