

Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Small Business
2361 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6515

To: Members, Committee on Small Business
From: Committee Staff
Date: May 11, 2016
Re: Full Committee Hearing: “Inspiring Entrepreneurs: Learning from the Experts”

On Wednesday, May 11, 2016, at 11:00 a.m. in Room 2360 of the Rayburn House Office Building, the Committee on Small Business will meet for a hearing titled “Inspiring Entrepreneurs: Learning from the Experts.” The Committee will hear from four individuals who are widely considered to be experts in the fields of small business and entrepreneurship: Marcus Lemonis, Susan Solovic, JJ Ramberg, and Melinda Emerson. This hearing will provide Committee Members with an opportunity to hear directly from experts about the lessons they have learned from a career focused on advocating for our nation’s small businesses.

I. Small Business in the United States

Every year since 1963, the President of the United States has issued a proclamation recognizing “National Small Business Week”, which recognizes the contributions of small businesses and entrepreneurs in every community in the United States. Setting aside a week to highlight the importance of small businesses serves as a reminder as to how crucial they are to our national prosperity and economic security. This year, National Small Business Week was celebrated from May 1 to May 7, 2016.

The numbers show just how important small businesses are to our nation. The vast majority of businesses in the country are small businesses. There are over 28 million small businesses in the United States, representing 99.7% of all United States businesses.¹ Additionally, small businesses employ 56.8 million employees, or 48% of our nation’s private workforce.² Small businesses also lead our nation in job growth. Between 1993 and mid-2013, small firms accounted for 63% of net new jobs.³ It is clear that there is a direct correlation between the success of small businesses, and the success of the American economy.

¹SBA, OFFICE OF ADVOCACY, SMALL BUSINESS PROFILE: UNITED STATES 1 (2016), *available at* https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/United_States.pdf.

² *Id.*

³ SBA OFFICE OF ADVOCACY, FREQUENTLY ASKED Questions 1 (2016), *available at* https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/FAQ_March_2014_0.pdf.

II. Small Business Experts

In recognition of the important role of small business in our economy, the Committee is welcoming four witnesses who are experts in the small business field. These individuals, entrepreneurs themselves, have made careers in providing guidance to small businesses owners and advocating for the interests in small business. These witnesses have seen first-hand the struggles and triumphs of small businesses, and will be able to testify regarding common challenges impacting small businesses today, and how these trends may have changed over time. The Committee will hear directly from these experts about the important lessons facing small business owners and entrepreneurs building their businesses.

a. Ramon Ray⁴

Ramon Ray is an entrepreneur, keynote speaker, author, journalist, and publisher/editor of Smart Hustle Magazine. He is a former technology consultant who took his experience in social media, mobile computing, computer networks, and online software, and used to advise small businesses. His specialty is in working with small businesses to help them grow by better utilizing technology and marketing. Ramon has traveled the nation speaking at and hosting events designed to help small business owners and entrepreneurs grow their businesses. He has an active media presence, appearing in the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Entrepreneur Magazine, MSNBC, and others. His magazine, Smart Hustle, is dedicated to telling the journey of entrepreneurs and small business. Additionally, he is the author of the bestselling book, *The Facebook Guide to Small Business Marketing*.

b. Susan Solovic⁵

Known in small businesses circles as THE Small Business Expert, Susan Solovic is an entrepreneur, best-selling author, media personality, and speaker. She was the CEO and co-founder of one of the first video-based internet sites, a company which in 2006 won the American Business Award for Most Innovative Company under 100 employees.

Ms. Solovic took the lessons learned from starting and running her business and has passed those lessons along through her work in the media. She is a former small business contributor for ABC News as well as a former host of the syndicated radio program, *It's Your Biz*. She has appeared as a small business expert on Fox Business, Fox News, The Wall Street Journal's "Lunch Break", MSNBC, CNN, CNBC, as well as many others. She has written four bestselling books: "Girls' Guide to Power & Success"; "Reinvent Your Career: Attain the Success You Desire and Deserve"; "The Girls' Guide to Building a Million-Dollar Business"; and "It's Your Biz: The Complete Guide to Becoming Your Own Boss."

Ms. Solovic serves as a member on the Advisory Board for the John Cook School of Entrepreneurship at Saint Louis University, where she also served as an adjunct professor on entrepreneurship in the Masters of Business Administration Program. She served on the National

⁴ For more information, see his official website: <http://www.ramonray.com/>.

⁵ For more information, see her official website: <http://www.susansolovic.com/>.

Women's Business Council, and is a past board member of the Women's Leadership Board at Harvard University; the Women Presidents' Organization; Women Impact Public Policy; and the Institute for Economic Development of Women. She currently serves as the media director for the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council. Ms. Solovic is also an attorney, and earned her law degree from St. Louis University

c. JJ Ramberg⁶

JJ Ramberg is the host of "Your Business", a small business oriented program on MSNBC that is currently in its seventh season. It is the only television show dedicated to issues affecting small business owners. The show "has profiled hundreds of small business owners and offered advice from countless business experts and investors."⁷ Ms. Ramberg has appeared on The TODAY Show as a regular contributor, speaking on small business and financial issues. In addition, she also co-authored a book, "It's Your Business: 183 Essential Tips that Will Transform Your Small Business."

Ms. Ramberg is also an entrepreneur. Along with her brother, she founded Goodsearch.com, a digital coupon database that provides donations to charity. Goodshop allows users to select a charity of their choice, and then search a database for coupons to companies such as Amazon, 1-800-Flowers, or Walmart. When these coupons are used during a purchase, a donation is made to the chosen charity.⁸

Ms. Ramberg graduated cum laude from Duke University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, and went on to receive her MBA from Stanford Business School.

d. Melinda Emerson⁹

Known as SmallBizLady, Melinda Emerson is an entrepreneur, speaker, and columnist advocating for small business. She is a regular columnist for the New York Times, and has been quoted by The Wall Street Journal, Fortune, MSNBC, and Fox News. She is a regular contributor to Essence magazine and the lead instructor for the Black Enterprise Small Business University. Her resource blog, www.succeedasyourownboss.com, provides helpful information for entrepreneurs, and is syndicated by the Huffington Post. She is the bestselling author of "Become Your Own Boss in 12 Months", as well as the ebook "How to Become a Social Media Ninja." She is very active on social media and was named the #1 woman for entrepreneurs to follow on twitter by Forbes magazine.

B¹⁰ She has also created the Melinda F. Emerson Foundation for small business success, which provides training materials for small organizations and schools to teach her entrepreneurial methods. She is a graduate of Virginia Tech.

⁶ For more information: see: http://www.nbcnews.com/id/13832409/ns/msnbc-meet_the_faces_of_msnbc/t/jj-ramberg/.

⁷ <http://www.msnbc.com/your-business/about>.

⁸ <http://www.goodsearch.com/about>.

⁹ For more information, see her official website: <http://succeedasyourownboss.com/>.

¹⁰ <http://succeedasyourownboss.com/about/>.

III. Conclusion

National Small Business Week provides an opportunity for us to reflect upon the important role small businesses and entrepreneurs play in our society. The success of our economy is directly tied to the success of small business, and so it is critical that small businesses are able to grow and thrive. The four witnesses at this hearing have made their careers in advocating for small businesses, and providing guidance to entrepreneurs and small business owners. These are individuals who small businesses owners and entrepreneurs have looked to for advice, and this hearing will provide the Committee with the opportunity to join in this discussion.