

Commentary: It's a small-business Congress

By Dan Danner

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There are a lot of new faces in town.

Ninety-four, to be exact.

While these faces may be new in the halls of Congress, they are familiar in their hometowns -- and not from rope lines or television ads. No, they are familiar faces because they've been seen behind shop counters and in restaurant kitchens, driving pickups and tractors, because a good number of them are also small-business owners.

America has elected a small-business Congress. Indeed, an unprecedented 25 members of the freshman class not only own and/or operate their own small business, but also are members of the National Federation of Independent Business, the nation's leading small-business association. What that means is these members not only understand how to run a small business but how policies in Washington truly affect a business' bottom line.

With the health of the small-business sector a major indicator of our nation's economic recovery, what a relief it is to know that the small-business community will be so well represented in Washington.

Small businesses in America are responsible for creating two-thirds of the net new jobs. Our economy is showing signs of recovery, but even with these glimmers of optimism, small-business owners are still hesitant to make capital investments and hire new employees. They are concerned about the deluge of costs they will incur resulting from the new health care law and new regulations that will strangle any opportunity for growth.

But there is hope, as the voice of small business in this Congress will be louder than ever before.

We can expect a small-business Congress to better understand the needs of American taxpayers because so many of them know what their constituents know -- that higher taxes, increased regulations and a cumbersome health care law hurt, don't help, the foundation of our economy.

The small-business Congress includes people like Rep. Robert T. Schilling (R-Ill.), who owns a pizzeria, and Rep. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.), whose family runs a farm equipment dealership. Both are personally acquainted with federal policies that have missed the mark by failing to promote small business growth and investment.

There are other welcome faces, including Rep. Reid J. Ribble (R-Wis.), whose family has run a successful roofing and siding company since the late 1950s. Ribble has a multi-generational business. He knows today's decisions affect tomorrow's livelihood. He is the kind of member the small-business community considers one of its own.

Ribble knows first-hand what it takes to make payroll each month; he knows what it is like to sign the front of a paycheck. He is a man who personally understands that a one-size-fits-all approach to policy doesn't help small business.

Having so many small-business people in Washington is outstanding news for the small-business community nationwide. These members of Congress know, on the deepest level, that the best way to create jobs and encourage economic growth is to get out of the way, and off the backs, of small businesses.

These new faces, this new small-business Congress, will be a powerful new voice for America's job creators.

It won't be an easy job, ensuring our nation's entrepreneurs are protected. But at least small businesses across the country can rest assured their views will be represented by many of their own.

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