

Good afternoon, members of the committee. Thank you, Chairman Williams, for inviting me to testify today about the politicization of the Small Business Administration. My name is Elaine Parker, and I'm the president of Job Creators Network Foundation. We are America's small business megaphone, and we educate the public, the media and legislators about how bad government policies affect Main Street and worker paychecks.

I'm not here today to badmouth the SBA. In fact, the SBA provided a lifeline to the small business I used to co-own -- a Goodyear Tire dealership in Martin County, Florida -- when we needed it most. Between 2004, when my town was hit by two devastating hurricanes three weeks apart, and 2006 when the housing bubble began to pop the region was economically devastated, and our business wasn't spared. We applied for and received a much-needed SBA loan to keep the lights on and make payroll. I'm forever grateful.

That's why I'm so appalled by the politicization of the agency.

American small businesses are suffering numerous hurdles, including resurgent inflation, overregulation, and slow economic growth. Price increases of goods and services have now officially reached 20% under Biden's presidency, and most small business owners say prices have increased by even more. Credit is extremely expensive, if attainable at all. And consumers are cutting back. According to JCNF's national SBIQ poll of small business owners, two-thirds of respondents say that current economic conditions could force them to close.

Yet against this backdrop, the SBA is choosing to devote its efforts to registering voters in a swing state rather than helping small businesses survive this difficult economic climate. That's unacceptable and a slap in the face to hardworking small business owners nationwide.

Besides the clear Constitutional and statutory concerns, the SBA's electioneering abandons small businesses when its help is needed most. The agency is choosing partisan politics over small businesses.

The SBA's mission is to "aid, counsel, assist and protect, insofar as is possible, the interests of small business concerns." How is registering Michiganders to vote advancing that mission?

Turning the SBA into an arm of the Biden 2024 re-election campaign and weaponizing it to advance Democratic party interests violates political norms and strips the SBA of its well-earned role and reputation as a defender of small businesses. The agency's stonewalling of this committee's oversight is just more proof that the SBA has gone rogue.

On behalf of the 33 million small businesses across the country, I implore the SBA to return to its core mission immediately. There's still time to redirect its resources back to helping Main Street America.

Economic conditions continue to deteriorate due to bad government policies, and small business loans are harder and harder to get. A robust SBA committed to helping small businesses is needed to ease this credit crunch and allow small businesses to survive and thrive.

Americans need the SBA to stop playing politics and empower more establishments to weather worsening economic conditions—just like it did for my Goodyear Tire dealership years ago.

Thank you for your time, and I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.