



## 2024 Congressional Startup Day & Startup Advocacy Week Toolkit

Startups are an important engine for economic growth and are often deeply rooted in the communities they occupy. Fostering this entrepreneurial and innovative community means supporting startups through policymaking, which requires connecting startup voices with their representatives in Congress. That is why Engine is organizing **Congressional Startup Day** on **August 14th**, to create the space for Members of Congress to meet with a startup in their state or district. To ensure lawmakers have ample opportunity to connect with local entrepreneurs and experience their constituents' innovation, meetings and events will take place throughout **Startup Advocacy Week, August 12th to the 16th**.

Because entrepreneurs have an intimate knowledge of the U.S. startup ecosystem, the goal of Congressional Startup Day is to allow the founders and startups themselves to advocate for pro-startup policies that will further strengthen the country's hubs of innovation. Since 2018, over 400 startups and entrepreneurs have met with their Members of Congress through more than 215 Congressional Startup Day meetings that have taken place from Anchorage to Miami and everywhere in between. The meetings generally run 30 to 60 minutes. These visits will raise awareness of entrepreneurial activity and job creation in your state and district, help generate support for the local startup community, and provide local entrepreneurs with an opportunity to share the challenges and opportunities of running a startup.

### How to Participate in Congressional Startup Day

We've compiled a toolkit to help you plan your meeting between policymakers and local startups, communicate your ideas and work, and share your experience online! Here's a snapshot of what the toolkit includes:

- Background on U.S. startups and entrepreneurs
- Possible Talking Points
- Sample Agenda
- Sample Social Media Posts
- Sample Press Advisory
- Sample Press Release
- Appendix: Previous Year CSD Op-Eds

Need help finding a startup in your state or district to visit? Please contact Engine's advocacy team, at [startupday@engine.is](mailto:startupday@engine.is).





## **BACKGROUND**

- Over 99 percent of U.S. businesses are considered small (less than 500 employees). [[SBA](#)]
- There were 33.3 million startups and small businesses in the U.S. last year. These firms employed 61.6 million Americans, or 45.9 percent of U.S. employees. [[SBA](#)]
- Startups that were less than one year old created approximately 3.7 million jobs in 2022. [[Statista](#)]
- America is the global leader of startup ecosystems. Almost half of the ten best startup ecosystems are located within the United States. [[Startup Genome](#)]
- Access to startup funding remains a major concern for U.S. entrepreneurs; at least 83% of entrepreneurs do not access bank loans or venture capital when launching a business. [[Start Us Up](#)]
- Sixty-five percent of entrepreneurs rely on personal and family savings for startup capital. Only half a percent of entrepreneurs get to utilize venture capital funding. [[Kauffman Foundation](#)]
- Underrepresented founders are disproportionately hurt by the cost of and lack of access to capital. Startups led by underrepresented founders receive 43% of what the average white male-founded startup receives across all stages of funding . [[McKinsey & Company](#)]
- Immigrant entrepreneurs account for nearly a quarter of all business owners in the U.S., a disproportionately larger share than their size of the U.S. population or labor force. [[Forbes](#)]
- Startups are the driving force behind most new job creation in the United States. From 2010 to 2020, startups accounted for approximately 30 percent of employment gains in the U.S. each year. [[Congressional Research Office](#)]
- Women founders and entrepreneurs of color play a significant and growing role in new business creation:
  - Since 2020, women make up about half of all startup founders in the United States. [[Gusto](#)] Women-founded startups are significant job-generators, and companies that have a woman founder and woman executive hire roughly six times more women employees than those without. [[Kauffman Foundation](#)]
  - The number of African American entrepreneurs has increased by 38%, and 17% of Black women are either in the process of launching or already running a new business. [[Forbes](#)]
  - Companies with racial and/or gender diversity are more likely to be profitable than less diverse teams, they produce products and services that target a wider market, and they ultimately often lead to better innovation and improved product development because of the breadth of viewpoints represented. [[Making the Startup Ecosystem More Equitable](#)]

## **SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS**

- Today, I'm proud to participate in Congressional Startup Day to raise awareness of entrepreneurial activity and job creation happening here in my district/state.
- Startups—particularly early-stage companies—are the driving force behind most of the new jobs created in the U.S. That's why it's so important for public policies to catch up to the needs of these innovators.
- We must continue to support the entrepreneurs and startups that are so vital to our economy, and ensure that they receive the resources they need to grow and flourish.
- It's critical to create an environment where entrepreneurs with good ideas can market their businesses to potential investors and customers. Doing so would allow startups to better compete with larger competitors that often dominate the marketplace.
- Congress can take a number of other steps to support startups, including:
  - Narrowing the digital divide and ensuring that entrepreneurs and consumers all across the country have equal access to high-speed broadband services.
  - Fixing our immigration system so that we can train and retain talented workers and entrepreneurs who want to legally be a part of our country's economy.
  - Investing in infrastructure, research and development, and future STEM leaders so emerging startups can grow and thrive in the global marketplace.
  - Preserving the balanced intermediary liability frameworks that startups and other digital platforms rely on to grow, innovate, and compete with more established industry players.
  - Ensuring that women and underrepresented founders have the tools and resources they need to bring their unique voices, leadership, and experiences into the entrepreneurship space.
  - Looking for creative ways to make sustainable and usable capital accessible to entrepreneurs, while balancing protections for investors.
  - Reducing barriers and red tape for small businesses and making government work better for startups.
  - Increasing the visibility of startups within their home states and districts in order to promote the developing startup ecosystems located around the country.

## **MEETING AGENDAS**

We welcome startups and lawmakers to work out the finer details of the meetings, including format and discussion topics. Meetings generally run 40-60 minutes and have included town hall-style discussions, demo days, office and space walkthroughs, and more freewheeling conversations. We encourage all participating offices and startups to connect with one another in advance of the meeting to discuss any specific meeting logistics.

We have provided sample agendas below that have proven useful for in-person meetings (although do not feel compelled to use this as the template for your meeting).

### **Sample In-Person Agenda**

- 2:00 p.m. Welcome and introductions  
To include: history of company, number of employees, product overview
- 2:10 p.m. Tour of facility  
To include: introductions to relevant staff
- 2:30 p.m. Startup Q&A session  
To include: discuss startup experience, policies that help and hurt, topics such as broadband access, capital, talent.
- 2:55 p.m. Photos
- 3:00 p.m. Event concludes

## **SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS**

- Excited to meet with @RepSen\_NAME today for #CongressionalStartupDay! Celebrating how innovation and entrepreneurship are shaping America's future. Learn more at <https://www.engine.is/congressional-startup-day>
- Looking forward to connecting with @RepSen\_NAME today, joining in on #CongressionalStartupDay to celebrate the impact of innovation and entrepreneurship. <https://www.engine.is/congressional-startup-day>
- Startups are fueling job creation nationwide. I'm thrilled to take part in #CongressionalStartupDay, championing these crucial economic engines driving our nation forward. <https://www.engine.is/congressional-startup-day>
- #Startups are not only creating jobs but also enriching communities nationwide. Let's come together to celebrate their groundbreaking innovation this #CongressionalStartupDay! <https://www.engine.is/congressional-startup-day>
- Excited to meet with @RepSen\_NAME today for #CongressionalStartupDay! Proud to showcase how our startup is driving innovation and creating jobs. Learn more at <https://www.engine.is/congressional-startup-day> #StartupAdvocacyWeek
- Looking forward to discussing with @RepSen\_NAME today how our startup is making an impact in [CITY]. Join us in celebrating #CongressionalStartupDay! #Entrepreneurship
- Thrilled to share our journey and challenges with @RepSen\_NAME today on #CongressionalStartupDay. Supporting startups means supporting future economic growth.
- Today, we're meeting with @RepSen\_NAME to highlight our contributions to [CITY]'s economy and job market. Celebrating #CongressionalStartupDay with fellow innovators! #JobCreators
- As part of #StartupAdvocacyWeek, we're excited to connect with @RepSen\_NAME and discuss how federal policies can support startups like ours. #CongressionalStartupDay #StartupsEverywhere #Entrepreneurship
- Last year, startups and small businesses added nearly three million jobs to the U.S. economy. On #CongressionalStartupDay, let's celebrate our role in fueling the nation's economic growth and technological innovation.
- I'm participating in #StartupAdvocacyWeek with @EngineOrg, connecting with other startups and entrepreneurs in my [district/state] to celebrate #CongressionalStartupDay.

## **SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY**

FOR PLANNING PURPOSES

DATE: Aug 12, 2024  
CONTACT INFO: Danielle Germain  
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### **Sen./Rep. [NAME] Visits [Business Name] on Congressional Startup Day**

[City, State] – On Aug. [DATE], Senator/Representative [NAME] will visit [BUSINESS NAME] to host a [PRESS CONFERENCE/ROUNDTABLE/MEETING/ETC]. This event will highlight the significant contributions that companies like [BUSINESS NAME] make to the U.S. economy and their positive impact on the local community.

Senator/Representative [NAME]'s visit is part of Congressional Startup Day, a national initiative designed to spotlight entrepreneurial activities and job creation while fostering support for startup ecosystems across the country. This day offers local entrepreneurs a platform to inform their elected officials about the challenges they encounter and discuss how federal policies can aid in their efforts to innovate, develop new products, and expand their businesses.

**WHO:** Sen./Rep. [NAME] and other Startup participants

**WHAT:** [Describe event]

**WHEN:** [DATE, TIME]

**WHERE:** [EVENT LOCATION, include specifics for where press should meet]

**RSVP:** Credentialed members of the media who would like to attend should RSVP to [EMAIL]

## **SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Aug. 14, 2024

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### **Sen./Rep. [NAME] visits [NAME OF BUSINESS] for Congressional Startup Day**

*[BUSINESS] part of local startup ecosystem creating opportunities in [CITY]*

[City, State] – Sen./Rep. [NAME] visited [NAME OF BUSINESS] in [CITY] to explore how local startups are innovating with new products and services and leveraging technology to address real-world challenges. During the visit, Sen./Rep. [NAME] highlighted the role of startups like [NAME OF BUSINESS] in creating high-skilled jobs in [STATE] and discussed the importance of fostering startup growth for both regional and national economic health. This visit aligns with Congressional Startup Day, a nationwide initiative aimed at raising awareness about entrepreneurial activities, job creation, and supporting startup ecosystems across the country.

[QUOTE FROM SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE]

[QUOTE FROM BUSINESS OWNER]

Rep. [NAME] believes entrepreneurship is an essential component of a strong community and a strong economy. Startup ventures don't have to be large to have a major impact on overall job growth. Last year, U.S. startups and other early-stage firms created approximately three million jobs. These startups and small businesses provided 46.4 percent of all U.S. jobs in 2022, according to data from the U.S. Small Business Administration. Startup activity is occurring in every state across the country, helping to spur our nation's economic growth and technological innovation.

Congressional Startup Day also provides local entrepreneurs with an opportunity to educate their elected officials about the challenges they are facing and discuss how federal policies can support their efforts to test new ideas, create new products, and grow their businesses. Entrepreneurs often take tremendous financial risks to move a business forward, and it is critical that local entrepreneurs know they have the support of their elected officials.

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