

A New Era of Advocacy

**How the Biden Administration's Four Policy Priorities
Will Drive Advocacy Efforts in 2021 and Beyond**

- **COVID-19**
- **Economic Recovery**
- **Racial Equity**
- **Climate**

Executive Summary

The Biden Administration has set its policy agenda, which focuses on four priorities: **COVID-19**, **racial equity**, **economic recovery**, and **climate**. In our 2020 research, policymakers on both sides of the aisle provided recommendations for how advocates should engage on each of these issues.

How Policymakers Want Advocates to Engage on the Biden Administration's Priorities



COVID-19

For the most part, policymakers found the private sector's response to COVID-19 effective and want to hear more on **how businesses have protected employees and customers from COVID-19**.



Racial Equity

Following the widespread activism and engagement on racial equity in 2020, **policymakers want businesses to establish and implement long-term commitments to racial equity**.



Economic Recovery

Policymakers perceived PPP as an effective way to support small businesses financially, but they want to hear **how the private sector supports small businesses through its own initiatives (e.g., coaching programs, tech programs)**.



Climate

Heightened bipartisan focus on the private sector's responsibility in regards to climate change means **policymakers want businesses to set sustainability goals and track progress toward them**.

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Priority 1: COVID-19

"Few people in our nation's history have been more challenged or found a time more challenging or difficult than the time we're in now. Once-in-a-century virus that silently stalks the country."

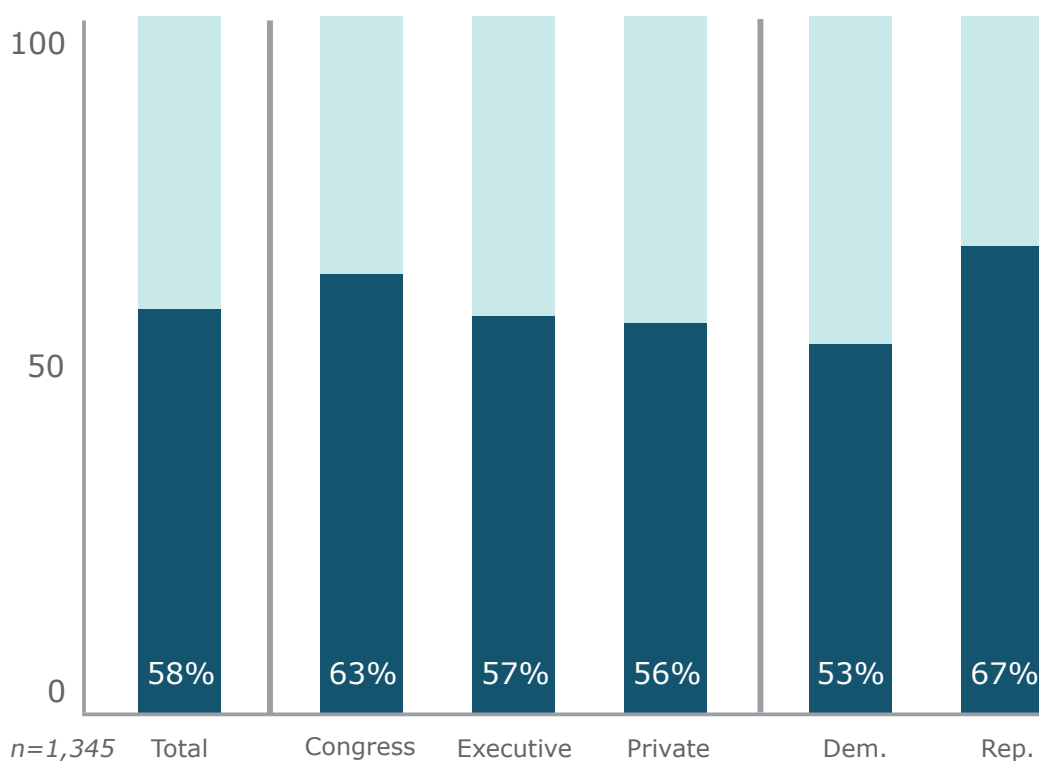
-The Biden Administration

Majority of Policymakers Find the Private Sector's Response to COVID-19 Effective...

During his first day in office, President Biden signed an executive order that invoked the Defense Production Act (DPA), which mandates that private sector resources and expertise continue to address issues related to COVID-19, such as PPE and vaccine production and distribution.

Effectiveness of Private Sector Responses to COVID-19

% of Policymakers Describing Response as "Effective" or "Very Effective"



Our research finds the majority of federal policymakers perceive the private sector's pre-DPA contribution of resources and expertise to the national COVID-19 response as effective.



PPE Production

"[Company X's] collaboration with the DoD on mask production is what America should be doing. This is the type of thing that takes the government authority, government funding, and private sector to address. This is how you're supposed to tackle issues in this country. And so, to me, I think it should be a model."

-Staff Director, Senate Committee of Jurisdiction, D



Vaccine Distribution

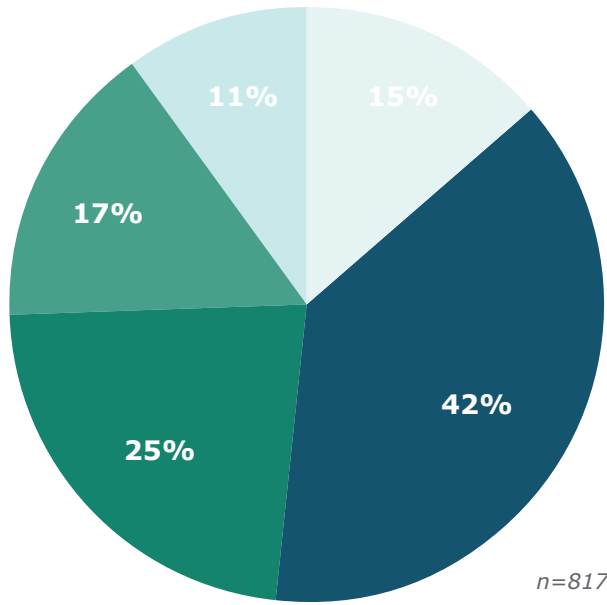
"[Company Y] has put out a lot on the vaccine front and is working with the administration. They have been very upfront in terms of the media and the work with the administration. They have done a good job positioning themselves as a partner, publicly."

-Senior Health Policy Analyst, Private Sector, R

...and Want to Hear More about Treatment of Employees and Customers

Policymakers want to hear how businesses adjusted their practices to care for employees and customers during the pandemic.

As it relates to COVID-19, what topics do you want to hear more from advocates on?



- Measures taken to care for employees
- Understanding the impact on jobs and the economy
- Measures taken to care for the local communities in which they operate
- Measures taken to care for customers
- Other

Chart depicts percentages of respondents who ranked a topic as "most preferred" in response to the following question: "What topics do you want to hear more from advocates on? Rank from "most preferred" topic (1) to "least preferred" topic (5)."

Employees



"Frankly, it would have been nice to hear more about workers. I think the challenge you always run into when you think about corporations is sometimes it's hard to believe what they're saying versus what you're hearing from labor unions or workers themselves. I care a lot about how they're treating their workers, and if they're furloughing, how they're furloughing. Or if they're just laying people off, then how they're doing that."

-Legislative Director, House, D

Customers



"I would say that Congress is still very much preoccupied with COVID, so the pharma companies are trying to react to what Congress is doing. I don't blame them for being preoccupied with COVID. It's a big deal and I get it. But related to COVID, they could be like, 'Hey, we know that if there's a treatment or a vaccine, we want to make sure it's price-effective.' Some of them have told me on the phone 'We just want to let you know that when the vaccine is ready, it will cost like \$2.50, so we're not in this to make money.' So that's refreshing to hear. They could do many things like that and just relate it to COVID."

-Legislative Director, House, R

Priority 2: Racial Equity

“The promise of our nation is that every American has an equal chance to get ahead, yet persistent systemic racism and barriers to opportunity have denied this promise for so many... President Biden will take bold action to advance a comprehensive equity agenda to deliver criminal justice reform, end disparities in healthcare access and education, strengthen fair housing, and restore Federal respect for Tribal sovereignty.”

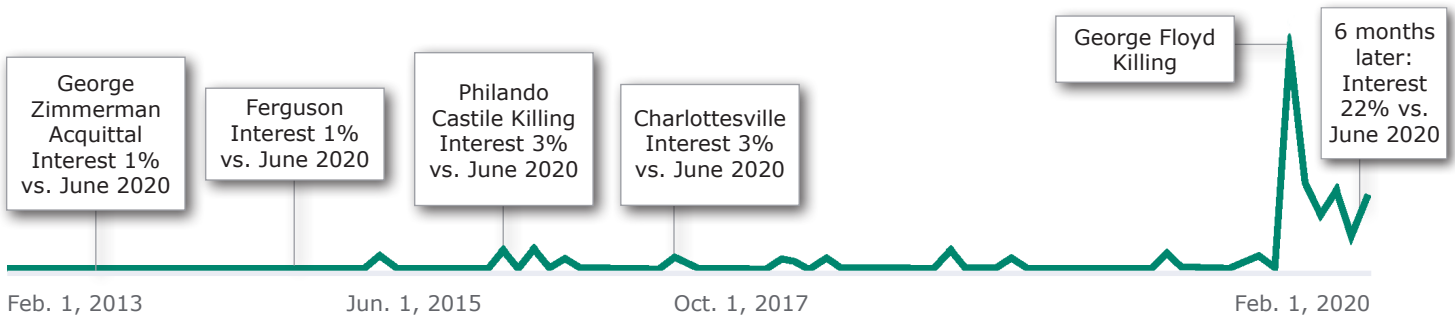
-The Biden Administration

Citizens and Corporations Took a Stance on Racial Equity

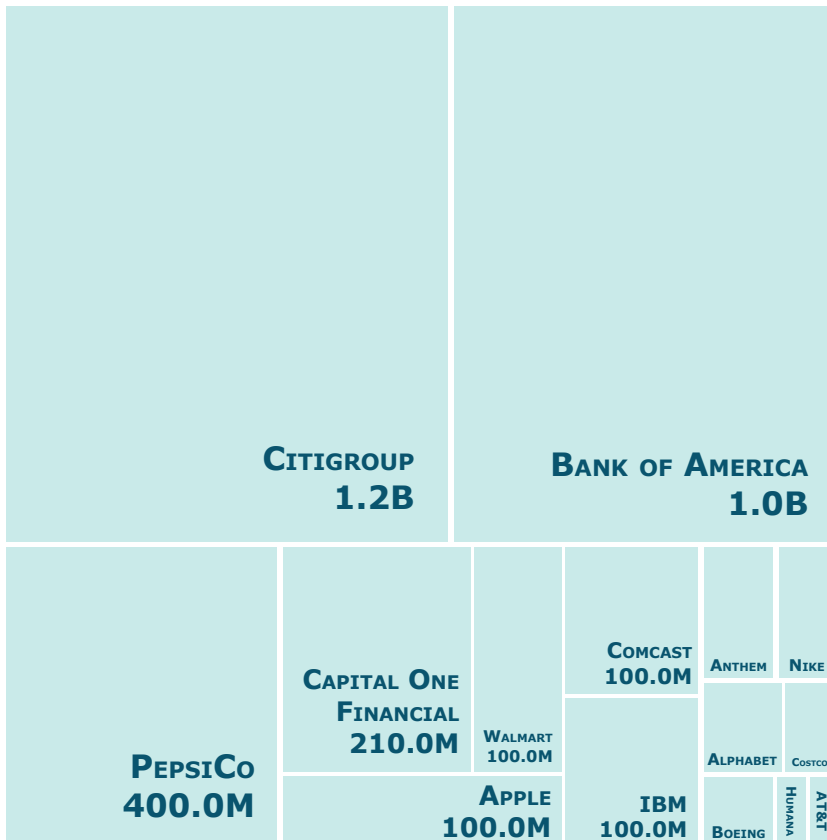
George Floyd’s murder sparked increased attention related to systemic racism, which has prompted many companies to address their roles in perpetuating racial inequity.

Search Trends on Systemic Racism¹

Google Trends Data on "Systemic Racism" from 2013 to 2020



Fortune 500 Companies' Financial Pledges to Combat Racial Equity²



“George Floyd’s murder was nothing new, but it was able to galvanize the entire country in a way that others haven’t. There’s now enough momentum that corporations can invest in those things without feeling like they might alienate board members or investors.”

-Senior Staff, Civil Rights Nonprofit

1. Google 2. Axios

Policymakers Want Companies to Share and Implement Commitments to Racial Equity

Notwithstanding prioritization by the Biden administration and significant investments from the private sector, racial equity, like so many other policy issues, will not be achieved at the stroke of a pen. Corporations must also be involved. Indeed, many companies' financial pledges commit resources for multiple years.

Policymakers want transparent, continued communication from public and private organizations about their racial equity work to ensure they follow through on their multi-year commitments.



"It's still too early to know how these pledges will work out. We are now five months out from the time when more organizations communicated these pledges, and I think it is still too early to draw out any conclusions since that time."



-Legislative Aide, House, D

Policymakers Want Advocates Who Represent Organizations With Racial Equity Pledges to:

Reintroduce

Policymakers want advocates to include updates on commitments at regular intervals (e.g., twice per year) to demonstrate progress and accountability.

"You'll meet with some groups the first time and they will tell you about this program they run at the end of the meeting and you're like, 'Yeah, that's nice,' but then you never hear about it again. You have no idea if they are still doing the program, or what's going on with it. Nothing. One organization told me about this program and then six months later, I had constituents in the program wanting to schedule meetings. So there was a follow up there that proved to be making it pretty real."

-Legislative Assistant, House, D

Credential Their Work

Policymakers want advocates to credential their racial justice pledges via credible, external parties, and include that validation in communications.

"Financial pledges are a mixed bag. That's why folks are skeptical. Sometimes the ones that tend to have the most follow up are linked to some other external standard. The organizations with an outside validating agency or organization tend to have more follow ups to pledges and tend to be more credible."

-Staff Director, Hill Committee, D

Priority 3: Economic Recovery

The Biden Administration's economic recovery plan includes additional funds for PPP and promises the following to provide more equitable relief to small businesses:

- New PPP Regulations for Businesses Under 50 Employees
- Distributing PPP Funding by Qualification Instead of Budget
 - Redefining the Loan Structure

Biden's Plan Proposes Modified PPP to Revive the Economy

The Biden Administration's economic recovery plan proposes additional rounds of PPP to support businesses. Despite early public criticisms about the program's implementation, our research suggests many policymakers viewed the first round of PPP as effective, and most offered constructive feedback to improve it.

Our Research Found:

58%

of respondents perceived PPP as effective (i.e., the program provided financial relief to businesses that needed it most). The remaining respondents expressed mixed or negative perceptions of PPP's efficacy (e.g., eligibility requirements prevented some businesses that needed loans from receiving them).



“

My general viewpoint is that overall it's working well. I think there've been some abuses in terms of companies and organizations tapping into it when perhaps they shouldn't be eligible or aren't. There's also been in some cases some distribution issues where businesses have run into bureaucracy and haven't received their payments in a timely way. But I think overall, given the speed with which it was rolled out, I think a fair number of people have actually received it.

-Senior Analyst, Executive Branch

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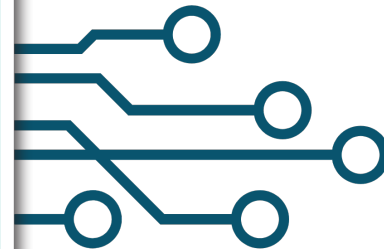
Policymakers Want to Hear How Companies Support Small Business During Recovery

In addition to participation in programs like PPP, our research suggests policymakers want to hear how companies support small businesses during economic recovery.

Coaching Programs

"[The Company] has a small businesses program, and it's kind of like the workshops you see with the tech companies. It's not a school and I don't know if they necessarily get a degree but these small business owners can go be a part of this program where they get some kind of training or education from it. [The Company] helps them with resources and things like that. They check up on how their business is doing, and we met with some of those business owners through [The Company]. It seems like a great program and the business owners seem to be thankful they were in it."

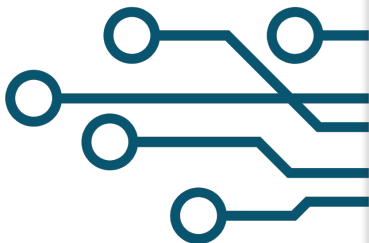
-Legislative Assistant, Hill, D



Tech Industry Support

"I would like to see the tech industry engage in economic recovery going forward by doubling down on efforts to support small business. I wonder if they could provide more assistance to businesses. I wonder if they could make even more of a push in helping businesses work with their products and have their products available online. Small business owners, who maybe have products and were just not really online before, are now trying to be online and running into roadblocks."

-Senior Staff, House, D



Priority 4: Climate

"...our environment and our economy are completely and totally connected."

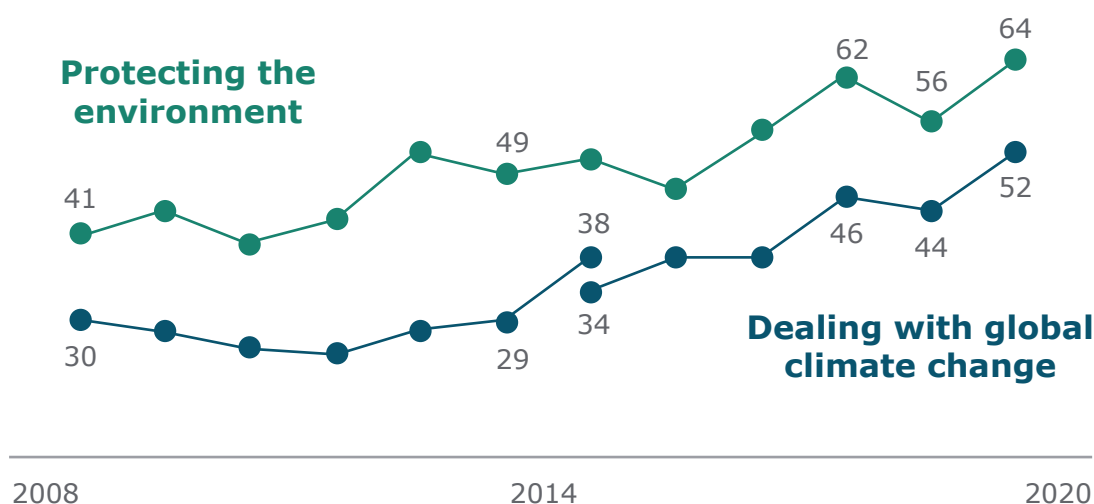
-The Biden Administration

Biden’s Climate Plan Reflects Americans’ Changing Views on the Issue . . .

Despite the current polarization of American politics, increasing numbers of Americans say protecting the environment and dealing with global climate change should be top priorities for the president and Congress. According to a recent Pew Research Center survey, a majority of Americans, including over half of Republicans and the vast majority of Democrats, expressed support for a variety of measures to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Increased Support for Prioritizing Policies on the Environment, Climate Change Since 2011¹

% U.S. adults who say ___ should be a top priority for the president and Congress



Biden’s Climate Plan is also an Economic Plan

While COVID-19 has propelled us into an economic crisis and racial justice is top of mind for many Americans, Biden’s climate change plan focuses on job creation and economic justice. Biden’s plan aims at generating jobs by rebuilding infrastructure, promoting conservation, agriculture and reforestation, and revitalizing energy communities, while also ensuring environmental justice.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.²

Joe Biden Wants to Make Almost Every Policy a Climate Change Policy

The Washington Post³

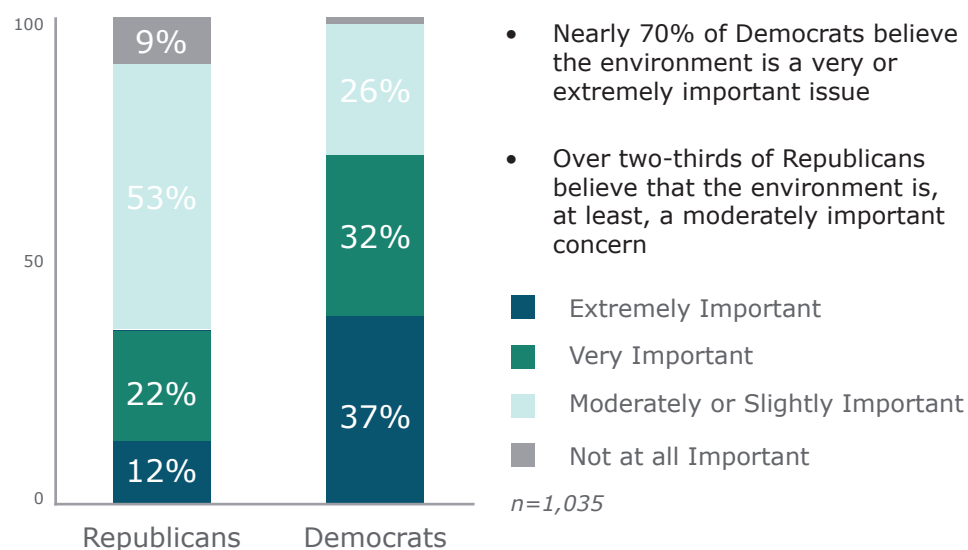
Biden’s Climate Change Plan is all About Jobs and Justice

1. PEW 2. Puko, Timothy. (2020, September 28). Joe Biden Wants to Make Almost Every Policy a Climate Change Policy. The Wall Street Journal. 3. Raymond, Leigh. (2021, Jan. 27). Biden’s Climate Change Plan is all About Jobs and Justice. The Washington Post.

...and Aligns with Policymaker Interest in Environmental Responsibility of Corporations

Policymakers on both sides of the aisle want to hear more about how companies address their role in climate change.

“As You Think About the Organizations that You Respect the Most, How Important is Their Commitment to Environmental Responsibility?”



“Climate change is really important to us and we’re concerned about the trend. If we don’t do something soon, we’re going to be in a place where the cost of food is going to rise exponentially, there’s going to be mass migration, illnesses, wildfires, and a host of other issues. So part of combating that is making sure that all of our plans are as informed and sustainable as possible. Not only is it good for the environment, but it’s cost-effective.”

-Legislative Fellow, House, D

Lack of Engagement May Come at a Cost

With Biden’s victory, it is clear that climate change will be a priority, and it will be viewed through an economic justice lens. Our research suggests there is a risk in not engaging on these central issues.

“I would say if companies don’t engage on these social and racial equity issues, then they’ll face risks... People are definitely looking for a statement because they see silence as complicity.”

-Policy Staff, House, R

Policymakers want Companies to Set Climate Targets and Communicate Progress

Policymakers want companies to set targets for environmental responsibility and provide updates on progress toward them.

“It is important for companies to say, ‘This is exactly what we’re trying to do in the short, medium, and long term to fix it.’ They should be very specific about what the fix looks like and have targets. They need to tell the public and the government, ‘Okay, this is our plan.’”

-Senior Policy Analyst, Federal Agency

“Some of the oil and gas majors have started to stand out. They come in and give updates about particular operations. They’ve come in with high-quality materials that have a lot of specifics, such as timelines so that we know what’s going to be happening, when, and what the impacts are.”

-Legislative Director, House, R

**An Exclusive Invitation to the Ballast Policymaker Hub
About Ballast Research**

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Why Join The Ballast Policymaker Hub?

The Ballast Policymaker Hub provides data-driven insights and resources for those in the public sector, including:

- Career development resources and guidance
- Invitations to events led by seasoned policy and private sector leaders
- Research insights on advocacy efforts, based on feedback from senior policymakers
- Opportunity to participate in pioneering annual research

Participation is open to those currently on the Hill and to policy experts in the White House and Executive Branch agencies. There are no fees or time commitments.



Our Goal

The goal of the Ballast Policymaker Hub is to offer unique value and insights to policymakers, who are instrumental in our efforts to further public and private sector collaboration in the advocacy space.

"We, as a government, never want to just be dictating to these companies what's happening. We want to be in a partnership with them on the assumption that we're all working toward the same goal, which is securing the health, wellbeing, and security of the United States."

-Director, Executive Branch

Join the Policymaker Hub!

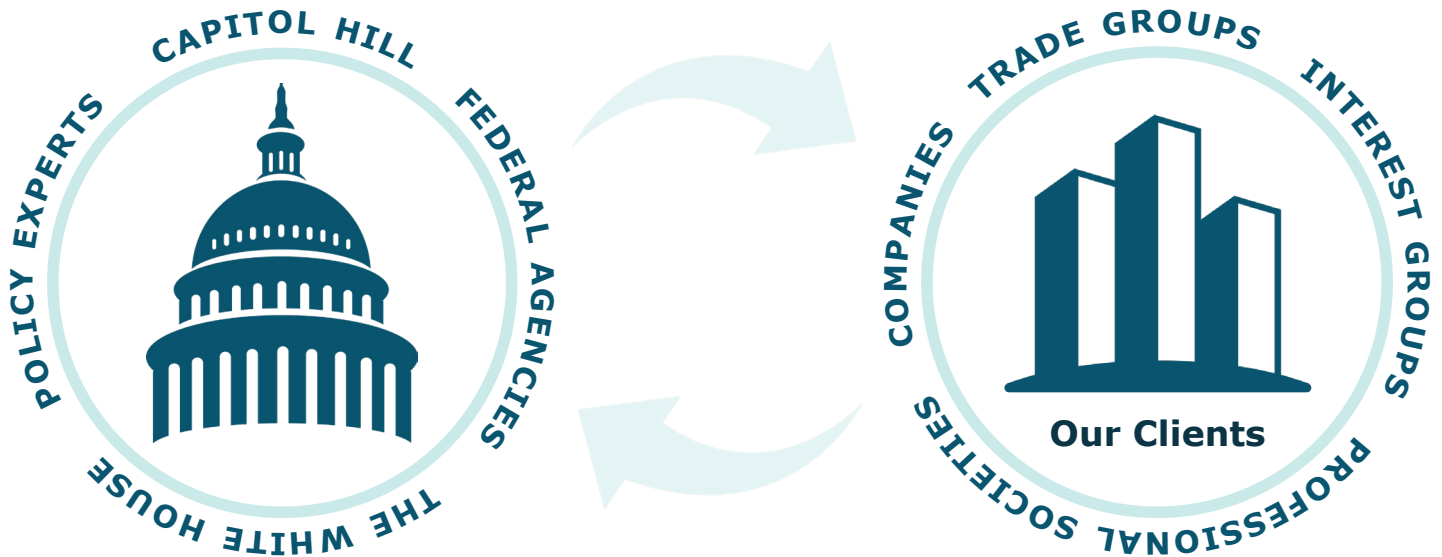
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About Ballast Research

Ballast Research provides feedback from policymakers directly to government relations professionals, helping advocates (1) make better use of policymakers' time and (2) provide resources and materials most useful to those in government.



Our Promise

Confidentiality: All participation in our research is confidential and not for attribution.

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“This deep-dive, customized research is invaluable for understanding what policymakers think of us and need from us. The insights are another important tool we use to inform our thinking on how to engage, and the data illuminates where we can do better.”

-Head of US Communications, Fortune 10 Company

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 **BALLAST**
RESEARCH

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