

AMERICA'S CHOICE 2012

# Small business to candidates: What about us?

By Jose Pagliery @CNMoney January 12, 2012: 11:30 AM ET



Restaurant owner John Kunkel wants candidates to talk more about the issues affecting small business.

NEW YORK (CNMoney) -- Republican front runners have debated about a wide range of issues: the economy, jobs and more.

But when it comes to talking about the problems plaguing small businesses, entrepreneurs say the silence is almost deafening.

Restaurant operators, health consultants, manufacturers and many more CNMoney spoke with say the candidates haven't given their concerns about health care costs, regulation and taxes enough special attention.

"Small businesses in general are not hearing enough for what's going to be done for them in the future," said John Kunkel, founder of 50 Eggs Restaurant Group.

Support for the candidates is spread across the board. Those backing the **front runner, Mitt Romney**, concede his Wall Street perspective is different from their own. But they also note that his business experience could be a plus.

Dave Jacobs, president of Houston-based TechKnowledge Consulting, plans to vote for Romney. His firm, which equips buildings with the latest technology during construction, has been hard hit because of the changes in health care reform.

## 12 entrepreneurs reinventing health care

In 2008, Jacobs spent many sleepless nights because fears about federal health care changes caused five hospital projects to be put on hold. That forced him to scramble for other deals and plug a \$1 million hole -- half of his company's expected sales that year. He doesn't think Romney's ever experienced such a nightmare, but he excuses that.

CNNMoney

comments

## Most Popular

- Gas prices may get close to \$5 in some spots
- Wikipedia, Reddit plan blackout in SOPA protest
- China's economic growth slows
- Zappos hacked, 24 million accounts accessed
- S&P downgrades Europe bailout fund

## Small Business Videos



### The life of a Christmas tree seller

Christmas tree stand-ups in NYC provide part time jobs for the unemployed in NYC. [Play](#)



### Poppy Harlow crushes car with tank!

In Kosota, Minnesota, a small business lets people drive battle tanks and crush cars ... no joke! [Play](#)

### Can a miracle berry end world hunger?

Chef Homaro Cantu is creating an inhalable form of the berry that will alter your taste buds into thinking bitter but nutritional weeds found everywhere are tasty. [Play](#)

## Job Search

simplyhired

- Accounting jobs
- Engineering jobs
- Finance jobs
- Management jobs
- Marketing jobs
- Sales jobs

SEE ALL JOBS

## Hot List



### SOPA explained: What it is, why it matters

The tech industry is abuzz about SOPA, an anti-piracy bill. Here are answers to five key questions about the legislation. [More](#)



### Is Obama the 'food stamp president?'

Newt Gingrich says Obama has put more people on food stamps than any other president. But that doesn't tell the whole story. [More](#)



### Top 10 executive MBA programs

Looking to get an MBA while holding down a job? Here's Poets&Quants' list of the very best executive MBA

"I doubt the guy's ever stayed awake at night wondering if he's going to make payroll," said Jacobs, who said Romney's experience would at least be better suited for maneuvering through bureaucracy in Washington.

Domonic Biggi, CEO of his family's Beaverton Foods in Beaverton, Ore., said the candidates aren't detailing plans to slow the rising cost of health care. In the last few years, he has had to pay more for benefits, which keeps eating into his 72-person firm's revenue.

"They're just not saying anything that means anything to me," he said. He added that he wants to hear exactly how a candidate will work with insurance companies to lower health care premiums and pass on savings. In the meantime, he is undecided.

Michele Michaelis Slifka, whose company IvySage Education tutors students with graduates from the nation's top universities, **voted for President Barack Obama**. But she has since become disillusioned with his policies.

Still, no Republican candidate has inspired her enough to switch parties and register to vote in New York's closed primaries.

"I've certainly been waiting for an intelligent voice to address the real concerns of small business, to fuel the bottom of the pyramid of economic growth," she said. "Nobody's been precise about articulating solutions."

Health care costs have made Slifka hesitant to take on more full-time staff in New York City than her one project manager.

Robert Livingstone has taken a similar approach in Weston, Fla., where he runs Ideal Cost, a go-between for companies to negotiate lower credit card rates. He's holding back from hiring staff to help him manage 40 contracted brokers across the United States.

"I would hire office personnel as actual employees if I had a firm grasp as to what the payroll taxes would be in the future," he said, condemning Congress for not extending a two-month payroll tax holiday further.

Livingstone supports **U.S. Rep. Ron Paul of Texas** and **former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman**.

### Doctors: Why we can't stay afloat

"They let private businesses operate without the fear of overregulation. They have a hands-off approach, which makes an entrepreneurial risk worth taking," he said.

Despite such criticisms, the half dozen candidates do have small business agendas.

**Romney intends to issue waivers** from the health care law and protect business owners against intellectual property theft from China. Paul has promised to eliminate income and capital gains taxes. And in October he sponsored a bill giving small businesses a six-month grace period to follow federal regulations. Huntsman hopes to reduce the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 25 percent and has offered to do away with the alternative minimum tax, affecting those business owners filing as individuals. **Newt Gingrich** plans to repeal the Dodd-Frank Act, which increases regulation on the financial industry.

In Miami, Kunkel plans to nearly triple the number of his Lime Fresh Mexican Grills in Florida and Alabama to 31 are colliding with worries about health care costs. In 2014, all employers will be forced to provide insurance for their workers or pay a \$2,000 fine for each one who is uninsured. Providing insurance for his 60 partners and executives cost him 6 percent of last year's \$18 million revenue. He expects that to balloon as he rolls out plans for more than 300 hourly employees.

But it's not government health care that bothers him. Kunkel said he supports an option to level the playing field and provide a low-cost service, but he said forcing it on corporations is "a death sentence." He's



programs in the U.S. [More](#)



### Is drilling causing Ohio earthquakes?

While Ohio residents are reaping the benefits of an energy-industry boom, they are also experiencing a rash of earthquakes. [More](#)



### Backyards leased for \$5,000 an acre

Eastern Ohio residents are cleaning up from the state's fracking boom, with 1,000 new jobs at a local plant and great rates for leasing the land in their backyards. [Play](#)

## CNNMoney Sponsors

considered Romney's idea of waivers but doesn't think it's enough. It would spare small companies like his but not large ones like restaurant chains, which he plans to rely on for partnerships, he explained. There would also be incentive for him to stay small, he added.

"We don't want to be a small business forever," he said.

The issues are worrying him so much that he intends to register to vote in Florida's closed Republican primaries later this month. He plans to vote for Huntsman but says he still hasn't heard enough from the candidates to be sure of any of them. ■

To write a note to the editor about this article, [click here](#).

 Print

[Obama's jobs record: An interactive timeline](#)

[12 entrepreneurs reinventing health care](#)

[Countries looking for your business](#)

[Doctors going broke](#)

## CNNMoney

### About CNNMoney

[Contact Us](#)

[Advertise with Us](#)

[User Preferences](#)

[Career Opportunities](#)

[Conferences](#)

[Business Leader Council](#)

### Content

[Fortune Magazine](#)

[Money Magazine](#)

[Business News](#)

[Markets](#)

[Term Sheet](#)

[Economy](#)

[Tech](#)

[Personal Finance](#)

[Small Business](#)

[Video](#)

### Magazines

[Subscribe to Fortune](#)

[Subscribe to Money](#)

[Give the Gift of Fortune](#)

[Give the Gift of Money](#)

[Reprints](#)

[Special Sections](#)

[Magazine Customer Service](#)

### Site Tools

[Site Map](#)

[Watchlist](#)

[Search Jobs](#)

[Real Estate Search](#)

[Mortgage and Savings Center](#)

[Calculators](#)

[Widgets](#)

[Corrections](#)

[Market Data Alerts](#)

[News Alerts](#)

### Stay Connected

[My Account](#)

[Mobile Site & Apps](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[YouTube](#)

[RSS Feeds](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Tumblr](#)

Market indexes are shown in real time, except for the DJIA, which is delayed by two minutes. All times are ET. **Disclaimer** LIBOR Warning: Neither BBA Enterprises Limited, nor the BBA LIBOR Contributor Banks, nor Reuters, can be held liable for any irregularity or inaccuracy of BBA LIBOR. **Disclaimer** Morningstar: © 2012 Morningstar, Inc. All Rights Reserved. **Disclaimer** The Dow Jones Indexes<sup>SM</sup> are proprietary to and distributed by Dow Jones & Company, Inc. and have been licensed for use. All content of the Dow Jones Indexes<sup>SM</sup> © 2012 is proprietary to Dow Jones & Company, Inc. Chicago Mercantile Association. The market data is the property of Chicago Mercantile Exchange Inc. and its licensors. All rights reserved. FactSet Research Systems Inc. 2012. All rights reserved. Most stock quote data provided by BATS.

© 2012 Cable News Network. A Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved. [Terms](#) under which this service is provided to you. [Privacy Policy](#). [Ad choices](#) 