Small businesses and the working families that power them are the heart and soul of Wisconsin. From family farms to main street shops and everything in between, small businesses are at the center of the community in every corner of Wisconsin. They support great jobs and economic growth all across our state.

To support Wisconsin small businesses is to support Wisconsin workers, Wisconsin families, and Wisconsin’s future. Fully 99 percent of all businesses in Wisconsin are small businesses, and nearly half of all workers in Wisconsin work for a small business.

As I’ve traveled across Wisconsin as your Lt. Governor, I’ve heard from countless small business owners and workers about the tough challenges we’re facing, and how difficult it’s been for families and communities. I’m proud to have worked alongside Governor Evers to ensure more than 100,000 small businesses got the help they needed to survive the pandemic and keep their workers employed.

But in Washington, the largest corporations get massive handouts, while small businesses are often left with little more than crumbs of support. Small businesses don’t have an army of high-paid lobbyists, and as many get left behind by Washington, it’s become harder and harder to compete with huge corporations to employ workers and make ends meet. Governor Evers and Senator Baldwin need a partner in the U.S. Senate who will fight alongside them to support small business owners and their employees.

In the disruption of this pandemic, small businesses have suffered the most from rising costs and supply chain disruptions while big corporations are raising their prices to reap record profits. And while workers in all sectors struggled with layoffs as businesses cut costs, small business owners and workers continue to be hit particularly hard. Now, small businesses face a labor shortage. As if that weren’t enough, businesses are also facing a torrent of bad trade deals, huge corporations’ continued use of anticompetitive practices, and the Chinese Communist Party’s extortionist economic agenda — making it even harder for Wisconsin small businesses to compete here at home and across the globe.

But as small businesses and workers struggle, Wisconsin’s senior senator has blocked relief and investment. Senator Ron Johnson worked his hardest to pass bills that give handouts to his wealthiest donors and even enrich himself, but he stood against bipartisan efforts to help family farmers and small businesses get by and thrive.

Wisconsin needs a Senator that will stand with every single Wisconsin worker and business, not one that will pick winners and losers based on who cuts checks to their campaign.
That’s why I’m releasing my plan to fight and deliver for small businesses and workers in the United States Senate. As your next United States Senator, I will:

→ Prioritize family farms and rural small businesses;
→ Crack down on corporate handouts and level the playing field for small businesses to compete;
→ Address bad trade deals and anti-competitive practices to boost Wisconsin business and compete with China;
→ Do right by workers and help Wisconsin businesses attract workers;
→ Grow local jobs and address supply chain issues by passing Senator Baldwin’s Made in America Act;
→ Support minority-owned small businesses and veteran entrepreneurship.

Thank you for reading this plan. If you have any feedback on this plan, you can reach me at www.MandelaBarnes.com/plans/mainstreet to let me know your thoughts.

— MANDELA BARNES
INVEST IN FAMILY FARMS AND RURAL SMALL BUSINESSES

Mandela Barnes understands the value of our rural communities and our agriculture economy. As Lt. Governor, Mandela has been focused on serving farmers and rural small business owners, and he understands the challenges folks are facing and the support they need.

Every five years, the federal government assembles a Farm Bill to invest in our rural communities and agriculture economy. In 2018, Congress delivered historic investments in farmers and key reforms governing the allocation of resources. A bipartisan supermajority came together to support the bill. But Ron Johnson voted no. Senator Johnson cited “runaway spending,” namely, his opposition to programs to help low-income families across Wisconsin’s rural communities afford groceries to feed themselves and their kids, while also increasing demand for agricultural goods, creating jobs, and injecting money in rural communities.

In the Senate, Mandela Barnes will fight to invest in rural small businesses and family farm communities, not oppose the central piece of legislation that helps them get by.

→ As the Senate takes up the 2023 Farm Bill, Mandela will fight for a robust and fair Farm Bill that creates jobs, helps families, and supports farmers.

→ In the Senate, Mandela will work to increase funding for key programs like Rural Business Development Grants that offer financial assistance to rural entities with less than 50 employees and less than $1 million in gross revenue.

→ In the Senate, Mandela will ensure historic funding for rural broadband included in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is directed to Wisconsin to connect rural small businesses across the state to the 21st-century economy.

→ Mandela will support rural cooperatives that help groups of would-be entrepreneurs support each other and finance their businesses more easily.

→ In the Senate, Mandela will partner with Senator Baldwin to reintroduce and pass the Go Pack Go Act, which would ensure that western Wisconsin bars, restaurants, and venues can air Packers games without having to purchase an NFL package.
CRACK DOWN ON CORPORATE HANDOUTS AND LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD FOR SMALL BUSINESSES TO COMPETE

In Washington, members of both parties often put the interests of the wealthy and well-connected ahead of workers and small business owners.

Look no further than Ron Johnson. Not only was Senator Johnson’s vote against the Farm Bill bad for families and farmers, it came only a year after he voted for legislation to give just three of his biggest donors tax handouts worth $215 million. Ron Johnson has made it clear that he’s opposed to investments that support farmers and create jobs in rural communities, but that he’s all for handouts to his campaign contributors.

Unlike Senator Johnson, Mandela believes it’s time to crack down on corporate handouts and level the playing field so that every worker, entrepreneur, and business owner has a fair shot in our economy.

→ Mandela will fight for fair budgets and tax laws that don’t pick winners and losers in our economy.

→ In the Senate, Mandela will work to repeal Ron Johnson’s massive tax handouts that only benefit the ultra-rich, and instead, provide tax relief to Wisconsin’s middle class and small business owners.

→ Mandela will vote to ensure all major federal contracts use union labor, ensuring that our taxpayer dollars support good jobs and individuals who get the job done right.

→ Mandela will also back legislation to crack down on anti-competitive corporate behavior across our economy — from Big Tech to Big Pharma to Big Agriculture — so that small businesses have a fair shot and huge corporations face real competition and can’t price-gouge Wisconsin consumers.
ADDRESS BAD TRADE DEALS AND ANTI-COMPETITIVE PRACTICES TO BOOST WISCONSIN BUSINESS AND COMPETE WITH CHINA

For decades, Wisconsin businesses and workers have faced a torrent of challenges, from bad trade deals to the rising anticompetitive practices of major corporations to the economic extortion carried out by the Chinese government, all of which have made it harder for small businesses to compete and thrive.

Washington politicians have sold out small businesses and American workers in order to write bad trade deals designed to help a few huge multinational corporations.

In boardrooms, major corporations have engaged in numerous anti-competitive practices that stifle innovation and growth, and make it harder for small businesses to enter the marketplace and compete in the 21st century economy.

And in Beijing, the government of China has undermined key American industries, devalued its currency, limited access to its markets, and used the politics of extortion to hurt American jobs and businesses.

Mandela believes that it’s long past time to stand up against the bad trade deals, anticompetitive behavior, and economic extortion and fight to do what’s right for Wisconsin businesses and workers.

→ In the Senate, Mandela will consider every trade deal from the perspective of what’s best for Wisconsin’s small businesses and workers, not any special interests. And he’ll work to ensure trade deals actually create new markets for Wisconsin companies to export to, creating jobs and opportunity here at home.

→ Mandela will crack down on anticompetitive practices used by major corporations to favor their own products, stifle competition from small business, and raise prices on everyone.

→ Mandela will also hold the government of China accountable for forced technology transfer, currency devaluation, illegal dumping of steel and other key products, and other practices that hurt American small businesses and workers.
Right now, businesses across the country are struggling to find and hire the workers they need to run successful and robust businesses. At the same time, many workers are struggling with low wages and a lack of access to benefits.

In this competitive labor market, small businesses are particularly disadvantaged by their relative inability to offer competitive benefit packages given the high cost of healthcare and so much more. And in key industries, there simply aren’t enough workers to meet demand — in large part because many people who want to seek employment are unable to due to a lack of access to accessible care for children and sick loved ones.

Mandela knows that all of these dynamics are bad for Wisconsin workers, businesses, and families. That’s why, in the Senate, Mandela will support investments that allow small businesses to offer great jobs with benefits to attract workers, and allow workers to access care for their families so they can participate in the economy.

- Mandela will fight to deliver affordable and high-quality child care so that more Wisconsinites with young children that want to work, can work.

- Mandela will help businesses attract and keep talented workers by putting America on a path to universal healthcare, with lower costs and high quality coverage. That starts with building a path to Medicare for All, allowing the federal government to negotiate lower drug prices, and lowering the Medicare age of eligibility to 50. Mandela also supports legislation proposed by Senator Baldwin to close the health care coverage gaps in states like Wisconsin that have not expanded Medicaid, which will ensure lower prices, better healthcare, and better access to care in rural communities.

- Mandela will work to pass paid family and medical leave to help businesses and workers remain financially whole when folks get sick or have to care for family.

- Mandela will invest in workforce and vocational education to combat the current labor shortage and to empower workers to take on the next generation of skilled jobs.
GROW LOCAL JOBS BY PASSING SENATOR BALDWIN’S MADE IN AMERICA ACT

Wisconsin families pay their fair share of federal taxes, so it’s only fair that our federal government always buys American with our dollars.

That’s why Mandela Barnes strongly supports passing Senator Tammy Baldwin’s Made In America Act, which would finally require the federal government to use American goods and services on federal projects. It’s common sense: when our government spends our money — to build new bridges or to install new high speed internet, for example — American manufacturers and small businesses should benefit.

→ In the Senate, Mandela will fight to pass Senator Baldwin’s Made in America Act to ensure that federal projects use American manufacturing.
SUPPORT MINORITY-OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES AND VETERAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Small businesses enrich neighborhoods and provide good-paying, rewarding jobs in underserved communities, but too often minority business owners encounter additional roadblocks.

As Lt. Governor Mandela has met and worked with countless business owners that have additional disadvantages when starting a business and getting it off the ground. Mandela has heard from Black, Latino, Native, Asian-American, veteran, and women business owners about how the struggle of raising capital and accessing credit put minority-owned businesses even more on the backfoot during the pandemic.

Federal pandemic assistance packages contained restrictions that meant many minority-owned businesses were ineligible to receive enough aid, or any aid at all. Due to minority-owned businesses’ historic disadvantage when it comes to accessing credit, many businesses were denied Payment Protection (PPP) loans entirely due to their credit history.

Mandela believes that entrepreneurship is a fundamental part of lifting communities up, and that small business owners should reflect the character and diversity of the communities they serve.

> Mandela will fight to ensure that veteran, women, and minority entrepreneurs have access to low-interest loans.

> Mandela will help ensure an equitable economic recovery by pushing for unrestricted grant funding for businesses that were left behind by federal relief due to credit, and pushing for EIDL loan forgiveness for small businesses with loans under $150,000.