

## Health care reform, transportation top business wish list for Obama administration

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Maryland business groups say health care, spending on infrastructure and relief for small businesses were among their top priorities as a new administration prepares to take over the White House in January.

The National Federation of Independent Business in Maryland believes that providing affordable health care should be the top priority for the Barack Obama administration, Maryland Director Ellen Valentino said.

“If affordable health care for small businesses is fixed, it will be fixed for America,” Valentino said.

Some business group leaders expressed concern over a bill known as the Employee Free Choice Act, which would make it easier for employees of small businesses to unionize. The bill was defeated earlier this year in Congress, but as Democrats picked up seats in Congress after the Nov. 4 elections, the bill could gain favor, said Tom Saquella, president of the Maryland Retailers Association.

Business groups like the retailers association would put up a “major battle” to defeat that bill, Saquella said.

If Congress passes another economic stimulus package, the Greater Baltimore Committee hopes it would spend that money on job creation or infrastructure, rather than cutting checks to taxpayers, said Donald C. Fry, CEO of the Greater Baltimore Committee.

Investing in transportation and other infrastructure is key to economic growth, Fry said.