

Legislative Priorities Among Key Women's and Small Business Organizations

There are numerous organizations and associations, both membership and non-membership, that advocate on behalf of women-owned and all small businesses. This issue brief summarizes the current legislative priorities of the nation's leading women's business and small business advocacy groups. The issues are listed in descending order of agreement of priority among the organizations. Additionally, this brief makes note of other issues of ongoing importance to the National Women's Business Council.

Health Care

Legislative priorities related to health care that have been identified by business organizations include:

- Ensuring access to affordable health coverage through association health plans, medical savings accounts, health care tax credits, and modifying current taxation on the self-employed's health care premiums;
- Ensuring reproductive choice and access to reproductive health services and education;
- Ensuring funds for research into and protection for women's health care needs;
- Encouraging the development of a national health care plan recognizing the special health care needs of women;
- Shifting Medicare to a Catastrophic Insurance Plan; and
- Stopping the trend towards increased regulation, mandates, and employer liability.

Organizations naming health care issues as a priority include:

- Business and Professional Women/USA (BPW/USA);
- National Association for the Self-Employed (NASE);
- National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB);
- Small Business Survival Committee (SBSC);
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce;
- Women Entrepreneurs, Inc. (WE Inc.); and
- Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP).

The National Women's Business Council has issued a more in-depth brief on the topic of health care.

Economic Equity and Tax Relief

Legislative issues that are the focus of major business associations and organizations include:

- Ensuring pay equity, equal educational and economic opportunities at all stages of life;
- Promoting affordable, quality dependent care to help ensure economic self-sufficiency for women;
- Increasing the deduction for business meals and equipment;
- Accelerated income-tax relief and increased expensing limits;
- Permanent repeal of the death-tax;
- Cutting capital gains taxes;
- Expensing business investment;
- Dynamic scoring of tax measures;
- Dividend tax reform;
- Super-majority requirement for tax increases;
- Stopping efforts at international tax harmonization;
- Overhauling the tax code; and
- Expanding Individual Retirement Accounts and 401(k) accounts.

Organizations naming economic equity and tax relief issues as a priority include:

- BPW/USA;
- NASE;
- NFIB;
- SBSC;
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce; and
- WIPP.

Technology and Telecommunications

Key initiatives include:

- Policies and programs to increase access to the Internet within minority and underserved communities;
- Policies that create programs to increase access to e-commerce for minority businesses;
- Policies and programs that create high-tech training opportunities for minority entrepreneurs;
- Prohibition against new Internet and sales taxes;
- Eliminating per telephone line charges;
- Telecommunications deregulation;
- Stopping Tauzin-Dingell (related to local telephone companies and open access requirements with broadband infrastructure);
- Acceleration of broadband use by maximizing competition among providers and promoting public awareness of broadband's capabilities; and
- Addressing workforce solutions.

Key supporters of technology and telecommunications legislation include:

- SBSC;
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce;
- U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; and
- WE Inc.

Global Markets

Legislative priorities related to global markets and international trade include:

- Lowering U.S. barriers to trade in order to increase competition, improve quality, and lower prices for all consumers; and
- Entering into free trade agreements (FTAs) with other nations, to open up new markets and opportunities for U.S. entrepreneurs.

Organizations naming global market issues as a priority include:

- SBSC;
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce; and
- WE Inc.

Legal Reform

Key initiatives related to legal reform and litigation management include:

- Reforming medical malpractice laws, capping non-economic damages at \$250,000 and abolishing joint and severe liability, ensuring that parties in a lawsuit will only be liable for damages in direct proportion to their percentage of responsibility;

- Implementing a sliding scale for attorneys' contingency fees;
- Reforming the collateral source rule;
- Capping punitive damages in almost all civil cases for businesses with fewer than 25 employees;
- Work to enact a comprehensive and rational solution to the burgeoning asbestos-related liability crisis; and
- Comprehensive federal reform of the class action system.

Organizations naming legal reform issues as a priority include:

- NFIB;
- SBSC; and
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Access to Capital

Priorities related to access to capital include:

- Investing in federal funds to stimulate business and job growth in depressed areas;
- Implementation and expansion of federal programs that provide venture capital funds for minority businesses;
- Licensing federal programs created to increase opportunities for economic development within low-income communities;
- Addressing the tax system and how it hinders capital formation and diverts scarce resources into unproductive activity; and
- Conducting capital market outreach and educating the venture capital community about the extraordinary success of women entrepreneurs, thus increasing their potential and capability to secure growth capital.

Key supporters of access to capital issues include:

- U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; and
- WE Inc.

Government Regulation

Legislative priorities concerning government regulation and enforcement include:

- Promoting common-sense enforcement and compliance-assistance programs at federal agencies, offering a more cooperative, rather than confrontational, approach;
- Regulator overhaul, requiring Congress to review all regulations on a regular basis and eliminating those deemed irrelevant, outdated, or too costly;
- Congressional oversight to ensure that all government agencies are complying with the Small

Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act (SBREFA);

- Basing new regulations on sound science, including cost-benefit and risk-assessment analyses;
- Changing antitrust laws so that government bureaucrats and lawyers stop putting their own judgment above that of millions of consumers; and
- Rejecting increases in the minimum wage.

Organizations naming government regulation as a priority include:

- NFIB; and
- SBSC.

Energy Policy

Key initiatives related to energy policy include:

- Eliminating price controls at all levels of government, on all types of energy, and at all stages of production;
- Lifting restrictions on energy exploration and production on federal lands;
- Reducing regulatory burdens at all levels of government for building or expanding petroleum refineries and pipelines, electricity generation plants of all kinds and transmission systems, coal-based generation, nuclear power, hydropower plants, and heat and power projects;
- All efforts to regulate CO2 emissions and/or revisit the Kyoto Protocol must be avoided;
- Federal gasoline and diesel taxes should be eliminated, and highway and road projects funded at the state and local levels;
- Eliminating all forms of corporate welfare for energy-related industries;
- Eliminating government conservation subsidies and programs;
- Eliminating the Department of Energy, with any defense-related programs shifted to the Department of Defense;

- Privatizing the Tennessee Valley Authority, other regional power marketing authorities, and some 1,800 municipally owned utilities across the nation;
- Not increasing corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards; and
- The need for a comprehensive national energy policy.

Key supporters of energy policy issues include:

- SBSC; and
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Other Issues of Ongoing Importance to the National Women's Business Council

- Procurement:
 - Anti-bundling initiative
 - Promoting access to federal procurement opportunities
- Access to Training and Technical Assistance
 - Working with the Office of Women's Business Ownership on the women's business center program;
 - Review and analysis of mentoring programs in the business environment

The National Women's Business Council is a bi-partisan Federal government council created to serve as an independent source of advice and counsel to the President, Congress, and the U.S. Small Business Administration on economic issues of importance to women business owners. Members of the Council are prominent women business owners and leaders of women's business organizations.

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