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NATIONAL WOMEN'S
BUSINESS COUNCIL



ADVISORS TO THE PRESIDENT,
CONGRESS AND THE SBA

May 7, 2007

The Honorable Steven Preston
Administrator
U.S. Small Business Administration
409 Third Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Administrator Preston:

As advocates for women business owners, the National Women's Business Council believes that women-owned businesses must have the opportunity to compete for their fair share of federal contracts. Therefore, on behalf of the Council, we encourage the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to move swiftly in implementing a program to reach the government-wide five percent goal for women-owned small businesses.

In a recently released study conducted on behalf of the SBA, the RAND Corporation identifies four methods for determining industries in which there is disparity in contract awards to women-owned small businesses. The Council encourages the SBA to use the broadest possible definition of disparity, measured by *number of contracts* awarded to women-owned small businesses, as outlined in the RAND study.

The NWBC urges the SBA to implement the women-owned small business set-aside program as quickly as possible. In addition, when implemented, the program should include adequate guidance and training for procurement officers government-wide to ensure the set-aside is applied promptly and accurately. The Council suggests making procurement officers accountable for reaching the goal reflected in their annual performance evaluations.

As part of any effort to increase federal contracting opportunities for women-owned firms, the Council also encourages federal agencies to give greater internal support to the Offices of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBUs), which advocate for and serve as resources to small businesses regarding contracting opportunities. Other government-funded resources assisting women business owners, such as Women's Business Centers, Small Business Development Centers, Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, and SCORE, should receive sufficient support. These offices should receive adequate funding in order to continue providing effective outreach and assistance to women-owned businesses.

We look forward to working with you to assist in any area of implementation as this process continues.

Sincerely,

Tami Longaberger
Chair
National Women's Business Council