

WCOE Defends Caltrans against Disingenuous AGC Lawsuit

Women Construction Owners and Executives, USA (WCOE) is appalled at the attack leveled by Associated General Contractors (AGC) of San Diego against the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) outreach program. For years, Caltrans has been a model agency, requiring contractors on public works project to solicit bid prices from qualified women owned construction companies. “Women have not been welcome or accepted in the construction industry by many people,” says WCOE past national president, Deborah Wilder. “Caltrans has done an excellent job of creating a program which tries to level the playing field by requiring contractors to solicit bids from women owned companies.” The program requires general contractors, who are bidding Caltrans work, to solicit subcontractor bids from qualified women owned firms at the same time they contact their traditional male subcontractors for bids. “The Caltrans program has been outstanding. Women are not afforded any special treatment,” says Wilder. “We are still required to bid, bond, and perform the work like any other contractor, but unless and until the general construction population accepts that women owned companies can do as good a job as traditional male contractors, we are not even contacted to bid a project.”

In 1983, the US Department of Transportation first required outreach bid opportunities to women owned construction businesses. And, the Federal Surface Transportation Act of 1988 codified that women owned construction companies be included in outreach efforts to afford equal opportunity to compete for federally funded contracts. AGC has recently filed suit to challenge the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program implemented by Caltrans claiming that the requirement to solicit bids from women owned businesses is somehow discriminatory. “AGC’s lawsuit is disingenuous at best,” Wilder adds. “I am not asking anyone to hire my company because I am woman owned, but I do want the right to bid the contract and give you a price. If I am qualified and give you the best price, I should get the contract.”

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