

TURNING *Point*



VOLUME 25 ISSUE 11

WOMEN CONSTRUCTION OWNERS & EXECUTIVES, USA

December 2008

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Message from the President

By Deborah E.G. Wilder

The economic forecast looks pretty bleak this week. California is talking about suspending all of their major construction projects within the next 8-10 days unless the budget is balanced. And, many other states and the federal government are talking about scaling back projects as well. Housing starts are down and money is definitely tight. So, why am I optimistic? Because I know that WCOE members are resilient and know how to work smarter...not just harder.

Now is the time to look at the skill set of all your employees and determine if there are more efficient ways to do things in your company...everything from marketing, to bidding, to coordinating inventory/supplies, to scheduling. Do you have the flexibility and are you more productive working four-ten hour days rather than five eight-hour days? Check labor laws and union contracts to make sure you can do this without incurring additional costs or penalties.

Have a departmental or company-wide meeting and ask your employees for suggestions to make your company more efficient and/or more profitable. If things are a little slow, now might be the time to rewrite your employment manual or send some of your employees out to the training on the new CAD system. While now is not the time for dramatic change and venturing into whole new fields of construction, review what you do best and see if there is a variation of that skill set that can expand your market without a lot of additional cost or risk.

I know that the state funding for the type of work I am doing has been dwindling, so I looked for other similar types of work in other markets or with other agencies. I even went so far as to pursue the same type of work in other states. While all of this has brought change to my company, it also has created a healthy backlog which will see me through for several months and may well open new markets on a permanent basis. Be creative, be smart...be clever and we will be able to ride out this economic storm.

And, if you plan now to attend WCOE's 25th Anniversary meeting and celebration in Washington, DC, you can get a really good price on airfare. Put it on your calendar for March 22-24th and plan to be there. Happy Holidays to all and I wish you a Prosperous New Year.

WCOE

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WCOE's Annual Meeting
March 22 –24
2009

Mark your calendar now and plan to meet us in Washington, DC!

This is a very special year as it marks WCOE's 25th Anniversary. Registration material will be available in January!



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Upcoming Events

Construction SuperConference 08

San Francisco, CA
 December 10-12, 2008

International Home Builders' Show

Whirlpool (Corporate Alliance Partner)
 Las Vegas, NV
 January 20-23, 2009

World of Concrete

Las Vegas, NV
 February 3-6, 2009

WCOE Annual Meeting

The Willard Hotel
 Washington, D.C.
 March 22-24, 2009

WCOE Mid-Year Meeting

Las Vegas, NV
 September 13-14, 2009

Regional WCOE Conference and Coalition Annual Banquet

Kansas City, MO
 October 4-5, 2009

(If you know of events, that you would like to see added to this section of the Turning Point, please email the information to Ginny Douglas, Executive Director at: info@wcoeusa.org)

Quote of the Month

Everything is reachable with persistence. Be true to yourself and persevere.

~Stephanie Cohen, Golden & Cohen, LLC

Women First: Personal Net Worth Update

By Joann Payne

I am presently working with Speaker Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Reid's offices to include the Personal Net Worth (PNW) language in the economic stimulus package that should be introduced in January.

Speaker Pelosi's office has suggested the economic stimulus will have a substantial transportation component (approx. \$12.8 billion). I have requested the PNW adjustment language be included in the package.

I believe it is very important to include the PNW language in the economic stimulus bill. If not we may be looking at another two years before a new transportation bill is passed by Congress. If the stimulus package includes a large highway component, there will not be any additional dollars to fund the new bill. Additionally, I have argued that with hard economic times and banks hesitating to loan money to small businesses, limiting DBE to such a low personal net worth in an industry that one piece of equipment cost more than the threshold of \$750,000, impedes the DBE from getting loans, bonding and making payroll.

Senator Mary Landrieu was very supportive in advocating the PNW language for Women First. She tried unsuccessfully to attach the PNW language in the Congressional C.R. (Continuous Resolution) and the Defense Authorization bill. Both were moving at the last hours before Congress adjourned for the election. Senator Landrieu will be chairwoman of the Senate Small Business Committee in the 111th Congress. The Committee's Small Business Contracting bill, S.2300, will be reintroduced in 2009. Our PNW language will be included. Additionally, the PNW language should be included in the Transportation Reauthorization bill.

The Obama Administration should be open to adjusting the PNW threshold since President-elect Obama supported it when he was a Senator. I am in hopes that once the new Administration takes over, the new Secretary of Transportation will be willing to adjust the PNW threshold. There is no doubt we will have several opportunities next year to change the PNW rule.

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Women First: Personal Net Worth Update

By Joann Payne

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REAUTHORIZATION OF SAFETEA-LU

I have met with the House and Senate Transportation Committee staffs concerning the PNW issue. During these meetings, I have been asking them about the timetable on getting out a new transportation bill. As you can imagine, the staff is non-committal for dates; however, they are in hopes that the new transportation bill will be introduced in April and on the House and Senate floors by May. Don't hold your breath!

My guess is if there is a large bridge/highway construction component in the economic stimulus, the reauthorization bill will not pass in 2009.

WOMEN OWNED SMALL BUSINESS CONTRACTING RULE

Senators Kerry and Snowe and the Senate Small Business Committee staff were heroic in their effort to stop SBA's final rule on the Women's Procurement Program. Kerry and Snowe filed our amendment to the Defense Authorization bill which would have effectively killed the Women's Procurement rule put forth by the Bush Administration on December 27, 2007.

As you know, the final rule expanded the women's goals to 31 business categories out of 2300. Additionally, the final rule includes a provision which requires each federal department to prove past discrimination against women owned businesses before it can set up a program to administer the law. It will be very difficult for the new Administration to stop the implementation of the new regulations. President-elect Obama sent out a press statement against the Administration's Women Procurement rule and vowed to reverse the rule during his Administration.

WOMEN FIRST LOBBY FOR ECONOMIC STIMULUS BILL

Women First joined American Highway Users Alliance in supporting the House and Senate proposed economic stimulus package which will include approximately \$12.8 billion in highway funding.

The Senate proposal is \$8 billion for highways that would require a 20% state match while the House proposal would provide \$12.8 billion with no required match. When passed, the stimulus bill's highway dollars will be in addition to the \$8 billion in highway users fees restored in September to the Highway Trust Fund to keep SAFETEA-LU solvent.

WASHINGTON FLY-IN

The 2009 Washington Fly-In will be held in May. I am looking at the second week of May. I will send details in January. DC Accommodations is working on getting Women First rooms at the Phoenix Park Hotel. We will celebrate our 20th Anniversary when we meet in Washington.

*Article Courtesy of Women First and Joann Payne
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What the Election Results Mean to Women Business Owners

By Ann Sullivan, WIPP Government Relations

Washington will have a new look and feel in January, 2009 with the election of a Democratic President and a Democratic Congress with larger majorities both in the House and the Senate. The first and most obvious change is change in Cabinet Secretaries and political appointees in the federal agencies. Most, if not all Cabinet Secretaries will change and all those political appointees under the Secretaries change as well.

The agenda will change. Those in power make the rules and nothing is quite as evident as the change in the legislative and political agenda that will be put forth in the first quarter of 2009. The Obama agenda will look very different from the Bush agenda and with that comes new initiatives and different solutions to the nation's problems.

Because of the shift in elected officials, the leadership in the House and the Senate will look different. For example, Senator Joe Biden who will become the Vice President, was the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The Democrats must decide whether or not to keep Senator Lieberman as Chair of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee after his very public campaigning for the Republican ticket for the Presidency. Senator Kerry, Chairman of the Senate Small Business Committee has been rumored in the media to be a contender for Secretary of State under the Obama Administration. So, that means that three Chairmanships of Senate Committees could change in a very short period of time. The bigger shift in leadership is among Republicans. Although at this writing, a number of Senate seats have not yet been decided, Republican leadership roles in Senate Committees will undergo significant change. Those Committees affected are the Agriculture Committee, the Commerce Committee, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the Special Committee on Aging. In the House, the most senior Republican member of the House Small Business Committee, Steve Chabot lost his election bid and the Committee with jurisdiction over federal contracting in the House will have a new Republican leader with the retirement of Tom Davis and the defeat of Christopher Shays. With a change in leadership comes a change in the Committee's agenda and a change in how the Committees will function.

Now the question is whether or not the change in elected officials and a new President will result in a change of attitude in Washington. Is it possible to return to the days of politicians working together to find common solutions? Can the current leadership in the House and the Senate change the way they work with the minority/majority party? Can politicians really work together to ensure small businesses will continue to be the economic engine of the economy? Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid is quoted as saying "but really, this is a mandate for change and for hope. It's a mandate to stop fighting over the things that divide us and start working on the things that united us." Speaker Pelosi said, "working together in a bipartisanship spirit, we will rebuild America..." And if you did not hear Senator McCain's concession speech which may have been the most gracious speech anyone in recent memory has given, he called for the country to unite and come together to solve our economic problems. He gave a very strong signal that when he returns to Washington, he will go back to reaching across the aisle.

What does this mean for women business owners? It means that principles called for in WIPP's Economic Blueprint have a real chance of being reality. If Congress and the new President can truly work together, we may be able to get health care reform, a meaningful women's procurement program, access to capital, a comprehensive energy policy and access to the telecommunications technology we need to grow our businesses. That is if—and only if—there is a bipartisan will to work together to bring this country back from its economic woes to one of economic growth.

Even though the Democrats are in control of the House, Senate and the Executive branch, that does not mean that WIPP will work only with those in charge. The minority party plays an important role in moderating the wishes of the majority party. That is the brilliance of our democracy. Since women business owners are a very practical bunch, we expect to have disagreements over taxes and other economic policy changes that will affect our ability to grow. But we have always prided ourselves in being able to weigh both sides of the argument and work with everyone to achieve our economic goals.

So, it is with hope that we turn the corner from partisan to bipartisan. It is with anticipation that we see Washington function like it should. It is our challenge to work with the new people that will run our government. WIPP accepts.