



WOMEN CONSTRUCTION OWNERS & EXECUTIVES, USA

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2009 Issue and Position Paper

Women Construction Owners & Executives, USA (WCOE) is a national association representing women owners and executives in the construction industry. Women business owners face additional barriers of socio-economic stereotyping, which inhibit their ability to obtain capital, contracts, bonding, and access to market opportunities. This is especially true in nontraditional fields, such as construction. WCOE is celebrating our 25th anniversary this year as we continue to advocate for laws and regulations that help all small businesses, particularly those that will create a level playing field for women business owners.

Women Owned Small Business Program

WCOE looks to the current Administration to expeditiously review and implement contracting programs for women owned businesses. Far too much time has passed since Congress authorized the 8m program in 2000. Women business owners are a viable element of the national economy and deserve a level playing field and opportunities to bid and receive federal contract dollars.

DBE Personal Net Worth

The personal net worth standard of Small Disadvantaged Business was established over two decades ago. At \$750,000 (which includes retirement accounts) the threshold needs to be reevaluated, increased and indexed to address cost of living increases.

- Increase the personal net worth cap to \$3 million and index annually going forward.
- Remove retirement assets from an individual's personal net worth until the assets are actually withdrawn.
- Allow qualifying owners to engage in sound business practices.

Gross Revenue Cap

The U.S. DOT gross revenue cap places additional restrictions on women businesses in order for them to compete in the DBE outreach program. Women already face barriers and stereotypes that limit our ability to competitively bid and perform projects. The fact that many federal agencies still seem unable to meet the already low procurement goal for women owned businesses after a decade, is evidence that "business as usual" is not working. The gross revenue cap needs to be abolished. The SBA size standards should set the definition of a small business.

National Standards for Disparity Studies

National guidelines and standards need to be created for disparity studies. Too many companies claim the ability to perform disparity studies, yet those studies are routinely disqualified, leaving women and minority owned businesses without any outreach program. These guidelines should be set by the Transportation Research Board of the National Academy of Sciences and provide clear guidance to recipients to ensure that disparity/availability studies are consistent between recipients.