

These reports are critical to Congressional oversight and government accountability.

In 1995, Congress passed the Federal Reports Elimination and Sunset Act of 1995. This legislation terminated or modified the statutory requirement for over 200 mandatory reports to Congress, and sunsetted most other mandatory reports after four years. The intent of the Federal Reports Elimination and Sunset Act was to end the needless expense of hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars each year on many Federal reports that are of minor value to the Congress and to our constituents—the American people. I supported that common-sense legislation then and still support the elimination of unnecessary and duplicative reports now.

However, there are many reports required by Congress that as these have been reviewed we have proven are vitally important—including the 50 reports that this legislation will continue in the area of Banking and Housing. The recurring flow of timely and accurate information from the executive branch to the Congress is essential to our oversight responsibilities as Members, and as a legislative body and our constitutional responsibility—i.e. this is part of the check & balance system of our democracy.

Support H.R. 3046.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this bill strikes a balance between ending waste in Government on the one hand and preserving congressional oversight and public accountability on the other. I urge my colleagues to lend it their full support.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3046, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 3046, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTERS SUSTAINABILITY ACT OF 1999

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1497) to amend the Small Business Act with respect to the women's business center program, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1497

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Women's Business Centers Sustainability Act of 1999".

SEC. 2. PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

Section 29 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by redesignating paragraphs (2) and (3) as paragraphs (3) and (4), respectively; and

(B) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following:

"(2) the term 'private nonprofit organization' means an entity described in section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 that is exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of such Code;"; and

(2) in subsection (b), by inserting "nonprofit" after "private".

SEC. 3. INCREASED MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT AND REVIEW OF WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTERS.

Section 29 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656) is amended—

(1) by striking subsection (h) and inserting the following:

"(h) PROGRAM EXAMINATION.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administration shall—

"(A) develop and implement procedures to annually examine the programs and finances of each women's business center established pursuant to this section, pursuant to which each such center shall provide to the Administration—

"(i) an itemized cost breakdown of actual expenditures for costs incurred during the preceding year; and

"(ii) documentation regarding the amount of matching assistance from non-Federal sources obtained and expended by the center during the preceding year in order to meet the requirements of subsection (c) and, with respect to any in-kind contributions described in subsection (c)(2) that were used to satisfy the requirements of subsection (c), verification of the existence and valuation of those contributions; and

"(B) analyze the results of each such examination and, based on that analysis, make a determination regarding the viability of the programs and finances of each women's business center.

"(2) EXTENSION OF CONTRACTS.—In determining whether to extend or renew a contract with a women's business center, the Administration—

"(A) shall consider the results of the most recent examination of the center under paragraph (1); and

"(B) may withhold such extension or renewal, if the Administration determines that—

"(i) the center has failed to provide any information required to be provided under clause (i) or (ii) of paragraph (1)(A), or the information provided by the center is inadequate; or

"(ii) the center has failed to provide any information required to be provided by the center for purposes of the report of the Administration under subsection (j), or the information provided by the center is inadequate."; and

(2) by striking subsection (j) and inserting the following:

"(j) MANAGEMENT REPORT.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administration shall prepare and submit to the Committees on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on the effectiveness of all projects conducted under this section.

"(2) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include information concerning, with respect to each women's business center established pursuant to this section—

"(A) the number of individuals receiving assistance;

"(B) the number of startup business concerns formed;

"(C) the gross receipts of assisted concerns;

"(D) the employment increases or decreases of assisted concerns;

"(E) to the maximum extent practicable, increases or decreases in profits of assisted concerns;

"(F) documentation detailing the most recent analysis undertaken under subsection (h)(1)(B) and the determinations made by the Administration with respect to that analysis; and

"(G) demographic data regarding the staff of the center.".

SEC. 4. WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER SUSTAINABILITY PILOT PROGRAM.

(A) IN GENERAL.—Section 29 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(I) SUSTAINABILITY PILOT PROGRAM.—

"(I) IN GENERAL.—There is established a 4-year pilot program under which the Administration is authorized to make grants (referred to in this section as 'sustainability grants') on a competitive basis for an additional 5-year project under this section to any private nonprofit organization (or a division thereof)—

"(A) that has received financial assistance under this section pursuant to a grant, contract, or cooperative agreement; and

"(B) that—

"(i) is in the final year of a 5-year project; or

"(ii) to the extent that amounts are available for such purpose under subsection (k)(4)(B), has completed a project financed under this section (or any predecessor to this section) and continues to provide assistance to women entrepreneurs.

"(2) CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION.—In order to receive a sustainability grant, an organization described in paragraph (1) shall submit to the Administration an application, which shall include—

"(A) a certification that the applicant—

"(i) is a private nonprofit organization;

"(ii) employs a full-time executive director or program manager to manage the women's business center for which a grant is sought; and

"(iii) as a condition of receiving a sustainability grant, agrees—

"(I) to an annual examination by the Administration of the center's programs and finances; and

"(II) to the maximum extent practicable, to remedy any problems identified pursuant to that examination;

"(B) information demonstrating that the applicant has the ability and resources to meet the needs of the market to be served by the women's business center site for which a sustainability grant is sought, including the ability to raise financial resources;

"(C) information relating to assistance provided by the women's business center site for which a sustainability grant is sought in the area in which the site is located, including—

"(i) the number of individuals assisted;

"(ii) the number of hours of counseling, training, and workshops provided; and

"(iii) the number of startup business concerns formed;

"(D) information demonstrating the effective experience of the applicant in—

"(i) conducting financial, management, and marketing assistance programs, as described in paragraphs (1), (2), and (3) of subsection (b), designed to impart or upgrade the business skills of women business owners or potential owners;

"(ii) providing training and services to a representative number of women who are both socially and economically disadvantaged;

"(iii) using resource partners of the Administration and other entities, such as universities;

"(iv) complying with the cooperative agreement of the applicant; and

"(v) prudently managing finances and staffing, including the manner in which the performance of the applicant compared to the business plan of the applicant and the manner in which grants made under subsection (b) were used by the applicant; and

“(E) a 5-year plan that demonstrates the ability of the women’s business center site for which a sustainability grant is sought—

“(i) to serve women business owners or potential owners in the future by improving fund-raising and training activities; and

“(ii) to provide training and services to a representative number of women who are both socially and economically disadvantaged.

(3) REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administration shall—

“(i) review each application submitted under paragraph (2) based on the information provided under subparagraphs (D) and (E) of that paragraph, and the criteria set forth in subsection (f); and

“(ii) approve or disapprove applications for sustainability grants simultaneously with applications for grants under subsection (b).

“(B) DATA COLLECTION.—Consistent with the annual report to Congress under subsection (j), each women’s business center site that receives a sustainability grant shall, to the maximum extent practicable, collect the information relating to—

“(i) the number of individuals assisted;

“(ii) the number of hours of counseling and training provided and workshops conducted;

“(iii) the number of startup business concerns formed;

“(iv) any available gross receipts of assisted concerns; and

“(v) the number of jobs created, maintained, or lost at assisted concerns.

“(C) RECORD RETENTION.—The Administration shall maintain a copy of each application submitted under this subsection for not less than 10 years.

(4) NON-FEDERAL CONTRIBUTION.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, as a condition of receiving a sustainability grant, an organization described in paragraph (1) shall agree to obtain, after its application has been approved under paragraph (3) and notice of award has been issued, cash and in-kind contributions from non-Federal sources for each year of additional program participation in an amount equal to 1 non-Federal dollar for each Federal dollar.

“(B) IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS.—Not more than 50 percent of the non-Federal assistance obtained for purposes of subparagraph (A) may be in the form of in-kind contributions that exist only as budget line items, including such contributions of office equipment and office space.

“(5) TIMING OF REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS.—In carrying out this subsection, the Administration shall issue requests for proposals for women’s business centers applying for the pilot program under this subsection simultaneously with requests for proposals for grants under subsection (b). ”

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Section 29(k) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656(k)) is amended—

(1) by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following:

“(I) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appropriated, to remain available until the expiration of the pilot program under subsection (l)—

“(A) \$12,000,000 for fiscal year 2000;

“(B) \$12,800,000 for fiscal year 2001;

“(C) \$13,700,000 for fiscal year 2002; and

“(D) \$14,500,000 for fiscal year 2003. ”;

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) by striking “Amounts made” and inserting the following:

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subparagraph (B), amounts made”; and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

“(B) EXCEPTION.—Of the total amount made available under this subsection for a fiscal year, the following amounts shall be available for costs incurred in connection with the selection of applicants for assistance under this subsection and with monitoring and oversight of the program authorized under this subsection:

“(i) For fiscal year 2000, 2 percent of such total amount.

“(ii) For fiscal year 2001, 1.9 percent of such total amount.

“(iii) For fiscal year 2002, 1.9 percent of such total amount.

“(iv) For fiscal year 2003, 1.6 percent of such total amount.”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(4) RESERVATION OF FUNDS FOR SUSTAINABILITY PILOT PROGRAM.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Of the total amount made available under this subsection for a fiscal year, the following amounts shall be reserved for sustainability grants under subsection (l):

“(i) For fiscal year 2000, 17 percent of such total amount.

“(ii) For fiscal year 2001, 18.8 percent of such total amount.

“(iii) For fiscal year 2002, 30.2 percent of such total amount.

“(iv) For fiscal year 2003, 30.2 percent of such total amount.

“(B) USE OF UNAWARDED RESERVE FUNDS.—

“(i) SUSTAINABILITY GRANTS TO OTHER CENTERS.—Of amounts reserved under subparagraph (A), the Administration shall use any funds that remain available after making grants in accordance with subsection (l) to make grants under such subsection to women’s business center sites that have completed a project financed under this section (or any predecessor to this section) and that continue to provide assistance to women entrepreneurs.

“(ii) ADDITIONAL GRANTS.—The Administration shall use any funds described in clause (i) that remain available after making grants under such clause to make grants to additional women’s business center sites, or to increase the grants to existing women’s business center sites, under subsection (b). ”

(c) GUIDELINES.—Not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration shall issue guidelines to implement the amendments made by this section.

SEC. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act and the amendments made by this Act shall take effect on October 1, 1999.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) and the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Mrs. KELLY).

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today the House considers H.R. 1497, the Women’s Business Center Sustainability Act of 1999.

As a member of the Committee on Small Business, I know how important this bill is to Members on both sides of the aisle.

The committee held a hearing in February and thoroughly examined this program before drafting this legislation. The Committee on Small Business passed H.R. 1497 unanimously. Before I take a moment to explain the bill, I would like to thank the gentleman from Missouri (Chairman TALENT) for offering the amendment in the nature of a substitute that the committee marked up.

I would also like to thank the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ), the ranking member of the Committee on Small Business, for her help in moving this legislation forward.

Finally, I would like to thank the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL), the author of H.R. 1497.

This Congress, the Committee on Small Business sought more information about the Women’s Business Center Program as we considered reauthorization. It soon became clear that while the program was expanding around the country to States without centers, existing sites were experiencing obstacles to their own growth. H.R. 1497 addresses this concern.

This legislation balances the immediate needs of re-competition for centers in their fifth year of funding and the desire for new centers each year. The bill also allows for graduated centers to receive funding once the SBA selects the centers in their fifth year of funding to re-competition.

Since our hearing to examine this program in February, I have come to understand the urgent need for re-competition. But we must take a practical, well-balanced approach. That is what this pilot program is designed to do.

Next, I would like to take the opportunity to briefly explain the bill.

First, the legislation increases oversight and review of women’s business centers. SBA is directed to do an annual programmatic and financial examination of each center and then to analyze the results to determine whether the center is programmatically and financially viable.

Second, H.R. 1497 requires the SBA to issue the request for proposals for new centers and centers competing for sustainability grants at the same time in order to better manage the selection and award process. This provision is intended to ensure that new centers and sustained centers get equal consideration during the application review process and that funds are appropriately awarded. With regard to sustainability grants, the SBA shall make awards in two rounds, giving preference to graduating centers.

Third, based on the conditions described in the bill, the committee intends for the selection panel to judge on merit how well a center provided service to its market under its first award and how it plans to service its market in the next 5 years. The committee wishes for the Small Business Administration to use the conditions for participation in the legislation as guidelines for establishing strict criteria for re-competition.

The bill goes a step further by requiring the SBA as part of the final selection process to do a site visit of each center competing for a sustainability grant. The committee feels strongly that site visits are an important tool to help panel judges distinguish between the centers and to improve the oversight program. Recognizing that site visits are expensive, this bill makes available the equivalent of \$275,000 per year proportionate to appropriations to be used for site visits and other uses.

Fourth, H.R. 1497 incrementally raises over 4 years the annual authorization levels from \$12 million in fiscal year 2000 to \$14.5 million in fiscal year

2003. The committee increased the authorization levels to ensure that there are adequate monies to fund 45 existing centers, an average of eight re-competing centers, and an average of 10 new centers per year. The bill reserves a percentage of money each fiscal year for sustainability grants.

As an original cosponsor of H.R. 1497, I believe that this pilot program is the best approach to ensure that our invested Federal funds do not go to waste. As a former small business owner and co-chair of the Congressional Women's Caucus, I know how important this legislation is to our women-owned businesses. H.R. 1497 has been a top legislative priority of our Women in Business team, and I know our Members have been awaiting action on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me first of all begin by thanking the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) for her original cosponsorship and her leadership on this bill and also thank the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ), the ranking member, for her very active support of this legislation that is critical for the further promotion of women's businesses throughout our country.

The Women's Business Centers Sustainability Act of 1999 is an essential enhancement of the Women's Business Center Program, which will strengthen and improve this important service. As all of us are aware, the contribution of women-owned businesses to our economy has grown exponentially over the past few decade.

Today the eight million women-owned firms in this country contribute more than \$2.3 trillion annually to the U.S. economy and offer jobs to one out of every five U.S. workers.

Moreover, women-owned businesses are now starting at twice the rate of other businesses in the United States; and by the year 2000, it is expected that nearly one out of every two businesses will be owned by a woman.

In my home State of New Mexico, women-owned firms now account for 41 percent of all businesses, provide employment for over 35 percent of the State's workforce, and generates 21 percent of all sales. This success is even more remarkable in that it places New Mexico as the third most successful of all States in its number of women-owned business incorporations. This noble statistic identifies women-owned firms as necessary and as a necessary and essential part of New Mexico's efforts to improve the lives of all of its residents.

I would like to briefly tell my colleagues about Agnes Cordova of Taos, New Mexico. She has combined her cultural heritage with business acumen to create "Sube," a multimedia, bilingual educational program designed to teach

Spanish to preschool and early elementary children.

The set of flashcards, board games, videotapes with original music, and computer software have all been well-received in the local area, and plans are being hatched for broader marketing efforts.

Each component is offered separately so parents can afford the educational supplies that can supplement formal language education.

Agnes is now planning to develop materials for older kids, as well. By matching her heritage with business opportunity, Agnes is creating economic opportunity for herself and helping to preserve the unique culture of northern New Mexico.

One of the efforts responsible for the success of women-owned businesses in New Mexico and elsewhere throughout the country is the Small Business Administration's Women's Business Center.

Currently there are 59 centers in 36 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. These centers provide technical assistance, business information, and counseling and other specialized assistance to socially and economically disadvantaged women entrepreneurs.

The services provided by women's business centers include assistance in gaining access to capital, procuring government contracts, and helping women to work their way off public assistance.

In New Mexico alone, the six women's business centers run by the Women's Economic Self-sufficiency Team, WESST Corp., have already facilitated the start up and growth of over 600 small businesses, provided technical assistance to over 3,500 client firms, and conducted business-training activities for over 6,000 individual women entrepreneurs.

Most importantly, 81 percent of the clientele of these women's business centers have been low-income individuals and 47 percent have been women of color.

Nevertheless, in spite of their demonstrated contributions to the national economy and to individual women nationwide, recent surveys and testimonials have highlighted that many women's business centers have been forced to cut back on services or prematurely close their doors when they lose the support of the Small Business Administration's Office of Women's Business Ownership.

Today, 25 percent of the women's business centers initially funded by the SBA are closed.

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Of this 25 percent, many are only partly operational. In fact, while several of the WESST Corp sites in New Mexico that have already lost SBA funding have been unable to continue providing programs, others have suffered considerably in their missions due to this critical loss of support.

This is why I introduced the Women's Business Centers Sustainability Act of 1999. This legislation will allow recompetition for Federal funding by women's business centers which have completed a funding term and will raise the authorization of appropriations for fiscal year 2000 and fiscal year 2001 women business center funding to ensure adequate funding for qualifying existing and new centers over the next 4 years. This funding will allow the SBA to continue to promote the establishment of even more women's business centers in communities throughout the Nation as well as to ensure adequate, continuing support for already established, effective centers.

The women's business center program has helped countless women start and expand their own businesses. It is vital that we continue to support this valuable program. I invite and encourage all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation and I look forward to its bipartisan approval today.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) for their support and for the support of the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ). None of this effort could have been completed without their leadership and support.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ). She is our ranking member and she has provided great bipartisan leadership in this committee.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) for yielding me this time and I commend him for his work in authoring this important piece of legislation. I also want to thank the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT) for their continued commitment to women business owners.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1497, the Women's Business Centers Sustainability Act of 1999. This bipartisan effort will ensure that women's business centers keep their doors open. It will establish better oversight mechanisms and will ensure that the program continues to grow, with new centers in previously underserved areas. Our committee has a track record of supporting the work of these centers, and this bill is a continuation of our commitment.

Women entrepreneurs are an increasingly important part of the United States economy. Women own more than 8 million businesses and account for nearly one-third of all small businesses. Women-owned businesses provide jobs to more than 25 million people. These are not just empty statistics but rather a clear indication that women's participation in our economy creates jobs and improve the lives of millions of Americans.

Impressive as these figures may be, women continue to encounter obstacles

when trying to start, maintain or expand businesses. Here is where the women's business centers come into play, to help women steer clear of these obstacles and fulfill their dream of financial independence.

Fulfilling our commitment to women entrepreneurs, the committee recently held hearings that found that some centers, entering their fifth and final year, were not in a sufficiently strong financial position to phase out the Federal match. We also found that in order to improve the outreach of these services, the program needs to continue growing into underserved areas.

Recognizing the importance of women in today's economy as well as the important services these centers provide, our committee worked in a bipartisan fashion to resolve all of these issues.

Framed within budgetary constraints, the challenge facing our committee was to find the proper balance between the need to continue growing the program and permitting those in their last year of funding to recompete. H.R. 1497 strikes that balance by setting aside a portion of the total funding for new centers and another for recompeting centers. This is an important change that will allow centers with good track records to continue to provide their services while ensuring that the program will continue to expand into new and previously underserved areas.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize the importance of women businesses in today's economy and we recognize the important work these centers do, not only in improving women's lives but in improving their communities as well.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting women entrepreneurs across the United States by voting "yes" on H.R. 1497.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO).

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) for yielding me this time. It is really wonderful to have this measure here before us. The gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) and the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) have done an excellent job in bringing this forth to this floor.

Mr. Speaker, California is one of the biggest markets for products, especially in international trade. We recognize that women are the fastest growing segment not only in California but throughout the United States of the new business. These new businesses are so vitally important to the United States economy which is now currently providing more jobs than Fortune 500 companies, if one can envision that. Women-owned businesses now provide more jobs than the Fortune 500 companies. These nearly 8 million women-owned businesses provide jobs for 18.5 million people and generate \$3.1 trillion, with a T, we have heard it before,

I want to reiterate it, in revenue for this country.

Women-owned businesses are the fastest growing segment of business. From 1987 to 1997, the number of people employed by women-owned businesses grew by 262 percent. They have been booming and will continue to boom with some help from us. These are just some of the reasons why we cannot and we must not neglect women-owned businesses. With the welfare-to-work programs currently under way and the ever-growing labor pool, the jobs that these small businesses will provide are sorely needed to address the shortfall in jobs in the United States. Unless we pay attention to the needs of small business owners, we risk losing or at least hampering an important job creator.

These women-owned businesses need help in identifying loan institutions. I am not sure how many of us really understand that with the merger of large banks, small business, especially women-owned business, find it harder and harder to get loans from banks and loan institutions. This will be one area of assistance to provide for sorely needed identification of these institutions, help the business women develop business plans and follow through to make sure and ensure their success.

That is why I support H.R. 1497, the Women's Business Centers Sustainability Act. This provides for 10 new women's business centers that can help diverse and up-and-coming community entrepreneurs. We need them and we need to help them be able to grow and foster that job growth in our communities. In the very communities we talk about, these women entrepreneurs need just a little help in obtaining more information and making the contacts necessary to become successful business owners.

This bill is a step in the right direction. I certainly look forward to moving more in the future to help women-owned small business. These 10 new centers are certainly going to provide a boon for our economy. I look forward to working with the committee and my colleagues.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let me first of all say that the action of the Committee on Small Business in this bipartisan passage of this bill I think is very important. I want to once again thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT), the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) and also the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY). The Committee on Small Business, its hallmark has really been bipartisanship. We have been very productive in the 9 months we have been working on issues. I daresay we have one of the most outstanding records of any committee in this House.

I would also like to thank all of the staff members for their very hard work on this bill and what they have done to help shape it and bring it to this point

and particularly recognize Michael Day.

Mr. Speaker, let me begin my remarks today by thanking the Chairman and the Ranking Member for their active support of this legislation that is critical to the further promotion of women's businesses throughout our country.

The Women's Business Centers Sustainability Act of 1999 is an essential enhancement of the Women's Business Center Program, which will strengthen and improve this important service.

Over the past few decades the contribution of women-owned businesses to our economy has grown exponentially. Today, the 8 million women-owned firms in this country contribute more than \$2.3 trillion annually to the U.S. economy and offer jobs to one out of every five U.S. workers. Moreover, women-owned businesses are now starting at twice the rate of all other businesses in the United States, and, by the year 2000, it is expected that nearly one out of every two businesses will be owned by a woman. In my home state of New Mexico, in particular, women-owned firms account for 41% of all businesses, provide employment for over 35% of the state's workforce, and generate 21% of all sales. This success is even more remarkable in that it ranks New Mexico third of all the states in women-owned business incorporations—a statistic that identifies women-owned firms as an important part of New Mexico's efforts to improve the lives of all its residents.

One of the efforts responsible for the success of women-owned businesses is the Small Business Administration's Women's Business Center program. Currently, there are 59 centers in 36 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. These centers provide technical assistance, business information and counseling, and other specialized assistance to socially and economically disadvantaged women entrepreneurs. The services provided by women's business centers include assistance in gaining access to capital, procuring government contracts, and helping women to work their way off public assistance. In New Mexico alone, the six women's business centers run by the Women's Economic Self-Sufficiency Team (WESST Corp.), facilitated the start-up and growth of over 600 small businesses, provided technical assistance to over 3,500 client firms, and conducted business-training activities for over 6,000 individuals. Most importantly, 81% of the clientele of these women's business centers have been low-income individuals and 47% have been women of color.

The impact of women's business centers in New Mexico is illustrated through a number of success stories that were told by Agnes Noonan, Executive Director of the WESST Corp., during a recent hearing on women's business centers:

Heidi Montoya's desire to run her own firm grew out of the frustrations of working for years as a draftsman for a company which offered few benefits and no retirement opportunities. In 1989, Heidi took the leap, opening Builders Hardware of New Mexico, which sells commercial grade doors and frames and finish hardware. Heidi and WESST Corp. joined forces when Heidi attended an orientation meeting, and WESST Corp. granted Heidi a loan for a computer that enabled her to create a presence on the Internet and market more effectively to government agencies. Since 1993, Builders Hardware's

gross sales have increased by 129%. A single mother, Heidi maintains a second office at home for after-school hours.

Two years ago, Diane Barrett was receiving food stamps, sleeping on a friend's floor and struggling to provide for her son. But she also had a background as a chef. In 1996, Diane approached WESST Corp.'s regional office in Las Cruces, which helped her create a business plan and receive a \$5,000 loan to open a bakery and café. Since then, Diane has expanded the seating area, added a dinner menu, and is currently employing 19 people. In 1998, Diane's Bakery and Café was selected as the Mainstreet Business of the Year in Silver City, New Mexico. Recently interviewed by the Travel Section of the New York Times, Diane is a great example of how hard work and commitment to a business pays off.

Norma Gomez, a native of Mexico, came to the United States in the 1980's. On welfare, with three children and limited proficiency with English, Norma had difficulty being taken seriously when the opportunity arose to open her own business. With her small savings, she opened her shop in a strip mall in Farmington, only to find the overhead exceeded her income. She came to WESST Corp. for help with planning, marketing and financing assistance. With technical assistance from WESST Corp., Norma relocated, adopted an inventory tracking system, and developed a long-term business plan. WESST Corp. also convinced suppliers to provide Norma with accounts and better terms. The result of these efforts was a 300% increase in profits in the first year.

Agnes Cordova, of Taos, New Mexico, has combined her cultural heritage with business acumen to create "Sube!"—a multimedia, bilingual educational program designed to teach Spanish to preschool and early elementary children. The set of flash cards, board game, videotapes with original music, and computer software have all been well received in the local area and plans are being hatched for broader marketing efforts. Each component is offered separately so that parents can afford the educational supplies that can supplement formal language education. Agnes is now planning to develop materials for older kids as well. By matching her heritage with business opportunity, Agnes is creating economic opportunity for herself and helping to preserve the unique culture of northern New Mexico.

Nevertheless, in spite of their demonstrated contributions to the national economy and to individual women—recent surveys and testimonials have highlighted that many women's business centers have been forced to cut back on services or prematurely close their doors when they lose the support of the Small Business Administration's Office of Women's Business Ownership. Today, twenty-five percent of the women's business centers initially funded by the SBA are closed—and of this twenty-five percent, many are only partly operational. In fact, while several of the WESST Corp. sites in New Mexico have already lost SBA funding and have been able to continue providing programs, others have suffered considerably in their work due to the loss of support.

To address this problem, the Women's Business Centers Sustainability Act of 1999 will allow re-competition for Federal funding by Women's Business Centers which have completed a funding term, and will raise the authorization of appropriations for FY 2000 and FY 2001 Women Business Center funding from \$11 million to \$12 million per year.

The Women's Business Center program has helped countless women start and expand

their own businesses. It is vital that we continue to support this valuable program. I invite and encourage my fellow colleagues to join me in supporting this program.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In conclusion, I want to state that H.R. 1497 has broad bipartisan support. As the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) pointed out, this is a very bipartisan committee. We work well, and I believe that that bipartisanship works very well for sound public policy.

As I stated earlier, this legislation passed the Committee on Small Business unanimously. Again, I would like to thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT) for his efforts on this legislation. I would also like to thank the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) and the entire Committee on Small Business for their work on this important legislation.

Finally, I would like to commend the exceptional staff work that was performed on this legislation. Meredith Matty of the committee's majority staff and Michael Day of the committee's minority staff worked tirelessly on this issue and were instrumental in developing the legislation before us today as was Mr. Harry Katschis.

I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 1497.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my strong support for passage of H.R. 1497, the Women's Business Centers Sustainability Act. H.R. 1497 raises the authorization of appropriations for Women's Business Centers for fiscal year 2000 to \$12 million up from the current authorization level of \$11 million. Moreover, the bill increases the authorization rates to \$13 million in fiscal year 2001, \$14 million in fiscal year 2002, and \$15 million in fiscal year 2003.

The Small Business Administration's Women's Business Centers program supports 80 centers in 47 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. These centers provide technical assistance, business information and counseling, and other specialized assistance to socially and economically disadvantaged women entrepreneurs.

H.R. 1497 will have a dramatic impact on the growth of women's business centers as 60 percent of the funds will be reserved for new centers, enabling women in more communities and states to receive the economic and social benefits of the program.

Hawaii's Women's Financial Resource Center (WFRC), based in Honolulu, was first funded in 1999. WFRC works with women from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Fijian, Korean, Japanese, Filipino, and Chinese. Under WFRC's program, each client receives an individual assessment, which includes training in writing business plans, a marketing study group, and a monthly networking and information meeting. WFRC provides special topic workshops, such as "Designing Brochures and Flyers," "Taxes for the Small Business Owner," "Taking the 'Starving' Out of Artist," and "Starting a Home-Based Business." The center has also entered into a partnership with

the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii to provide distance/correspondence training. Within the next five years, WFRC plans to have sub-centers on at least two other islands.

Women's businesses are starting at twice the rate of all other businesses. We must do all we can to ensure that disadvantaged women are given the information and assistance they need to become full participants in our economy.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleagues on the Small Business Committee for their work on H.R. 1497, the Women's Business Center Sustainability Act of 1999. This legislation, before the House today will improve the Small Business Administration's Women's Business Center Program.

The women's business center program has helped start and improve woman-owned businesses in my district and across the country. During my service on the Small Business Committee I heard two suggestions from women's business center directors: Make funds available to start women's business centers in every state, and allow women's business centers to re-compete for federal matching funds after their fifth year of existence.

Today, with passage of H.R. 1497, we will authorize this program through the year 2001 and make women's business centers eligible for another five years of federal matching funds. Legislation from earlier this session increased fiscal year 2000 funding for the women's business center program by \$3 million and ensured full funding in the fifth year of operation for women's business centers.

Women-owned businesses contribute greatly to the American economy and represent the fastest growing type of American business. With passage of today's legislation and legislation from the Small Business Committee passed earlier this session, we have acknowledged the importance of woman-owned businesses and have made clear our commitment to their success. Support for the women's business center program translates into successful woman-owned businesses. I commend my colleagues for bringing this bill to the floor, I urge all members to vote in support, and I salute the Woman Business owners and women's business centers across the country.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, in my state and across the country, women are playing an ever growing role in the business world. I am pleased that the number of women and minority owned businesses in the state of California continues to grow.

With Business Women's Network (BWN) having its Global Summit in Washington D.C., now is the perfect time to recognize the growing power that women have in the business world. There are delegates from over 47 states and 97 countries participating in the summit which is celebrating diversity in the business world. The major theme of the summit is the use of cutting-edge technology to create More Business for More Women Across More Borders.

Knowing the importance of women in the business world and realizing the growing influence of BWN, I join my colleagues in asking that October 19 be recognized as Global Business Women Day.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1497, the Women's Business Centers Sustainability Act. This bill reauthorizes the Women's Business Center Program through fiscal year 2003.

I support this bill because the Women's Business Centers are instrumental in assisting women with developing and expanding their own businesses. The centers provide comprehensive training, counseling and information to help women succeed in business.

Specifically, this bill authorizes \$12 million for fiscal year 2000; \$13 million for fiscal 2001; \$14 million for fiscal year 2002; and \$15 million for 2003. For existing WBC projects, 40 percent would be designated and the remaining funds would support new programs. New centers would receive up to \$150,000 per year in federal funds.

This bill also creates a 4-year pilot program that makes competitive grants for an additional five years to non-profit women's business center organizations.

The Women's Business Center is a part of the Small Business Administration and provides long-term career training and counseling to potential and current women business owners. They operate in 36 states, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Women are starting new businesses at twice the rate of men and own almost 40 percent or 8 million of all small businesses in the United States. Women of color own nearly one in eight of the 8 million women-owned businesses or 1,067,000 businesses.

Women start businesses for a variety of reasons. With the recent spate of corporate downsizing in large companies and the various changes in the marketplace, small businesses are becoming a vital part of the economic stability of the country.

Women often start businesses because they want flexibility in raising their children, they want to escape gender discrimination on the job, they hit the glass ceiling, and many desire to fulfill a dream of becoming an entrepreneur. We should continue to encourage this current trend of women-owned businesses by supporting the Women's Business Center Sustainability Act.

The Women's Business Centers offer women the tools necessary to launch businesses by providing resources and assistance with the development of a new business. This includes developing a business plan, conducting market research, developing a marketing strategy, and identifying financial services. The centers also offer practical advice and support for new business owners.

Access to this information is essential to success in small business. The Women's Business Centers provide a valuable service to aspiring entrepreneurs. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1497, the Women's Business Center Sustainability Act.

Women in America are starting firms at twice the rate of all businesses and currently, women-owned businesses offer jobs to one out of every five workers. As of 1999 there are approximately 9.1 million women-owned businesses in the U.S. which make up 38 percent of all firms in the country. Over 23 million employees worked for women-owned businesses, an increase of 262 percent over the 1987-1997 period.

Mr. Speaker, by the year 2000, it is expected that a woman will own one in every two businesses. Based on these statistics, it is clear that women are changing the face of American business and women-owned businesses need our support to continue their con-

tributions to maintain a strong American economy.

H.R. 1497 will help women's businesses to continue to grow. This bill will create a pilot program to allow active centers to recompete, lower the grant level for these recompeting centers to \$125,000 and provide a criteria for the recompetition based on their track record. This bill will set aside a portion of the annual funding for a pilot program to allow active centers that are providing good services to recompete. If there is funding left from that recompetition portion we will allow centers that are no longer in the program to recompete as well. This bill will also increase the authorized level of the program from \$11 million to \$14.5 million.

Through proper allocation of the available funds, this framework will allow the program to continue to expand into economically and socially disadvantaged areas and allow minority women-owned businesses the opportunity to compete on an equal playing field. However, it is imperative that the selection and placement of women business centers is objective and equitable. Economically and socially disadvantaged areas must also be strongly considered for women business centers to allow all people and areas to benefit from this bill.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1497 because women business centers provide training and counseling in topics such as finance, marketing, procurement and the Internet economy for women who want to start, maintain or expand their business. Currently, there are 37 women business centers currently funded and 22 graduated active sites operating in 36 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. All centers provide individual business counseling and access to SBA's programs and services. A number of the centers are also intermediaries for the SBA microloan and loan prequalification program. This wide variety of services are essential to the success of women-owned businesses and this support will ultimately have a positive impact on our economy overall.

Since the creation of this program in 1988 by a Democratic Congress, the Committee on Small Business has been actively finding ways to help this program improve and expand on their services and training. Originally the program was designed to help start-up centers by providing them with federal matching funds throughout a three year period until they could become self sufficient. This 3-year cycle was adjusted in 1997 to 5 years. An average of 10 new grants are awarded each year through a highly competitive process.

Centers received federal matching grants on a scale. The first year they received two federal dollars for every private dollar they raised, the second and third year they received the match on a 1 to 1 ratio and on their final years for every two private dollars they raised the federal government would match it with one dollar. The committee has been steadfast in addressing issues affecting women's business centers and H.R. 1497 will help in this regard.

I urge your support H.R. 1497, which continue to strengthen the American economy and raise the opportunities for success and economic prosperity for all Americans.

Mr. FORD. Mr. Speaker, thanks to my good friend Tom UDALL for his hard work in bringing H.R. 1497—the Women's Business Center Sustainability Act—to the floor this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1497 will help provide resources to women entrepreneurs in an effort

to help level the playing field and provide opportunities to some of the most innovative and forward thinking businesspeople in our nation.

Today, women have finally begun to crack the once impenetrable "glass ceiling". In July, Carly Fiorina became CEO of Hewlett-Packard, the first female CEO of one of America's 20 largest corporations and women such as Meg Whitman, CEO of eBAY, and Joy Covey, CFO of Amazon.com, are revolutionizing how we live and work.

In my home state of Tennessee, we are fortunate to have Cynthia Trudell as president of Saturn Motors.

These individuals should serve as role models to aspiring businesswomen in the same way that Mia Hamm and Serena Williams have become role models in the world of sport. H.R. 1497 will help do just that.

It will allow more women entrepreneurs to use the resources of the Small Business Administration and it will enable their firms to receive assistance for a longer period of time, especially during the crucial first years of operation.

It also extends the authorization of the current women's business center's program, a program that has been tremendously successful in encouraging women entrepreneurs.

Mr. Speaker women-owned businesses are a huge force for job creation and economic growth across the country and, in particularly, my hometown of Memphis, Tennessee.

According to recent surveys, women-owned businesses are growing at twice the rate of all business growth and are primary components of our high-wage high-tech driven economy. They now account for over 8 million businesses, a total of 36 percent of all U.S. firms.

In Memphis, women-owned businesses represent millions of dollars in sales and revenue and in Tennessee, the growth of women-owned firms increased 90 percent between 1988 and 1998. Nationally women businesses increased close to 80 percent over the same period.

Women-owned businesses, however, will continue to face significant challenges in the 21st century, particularly in the area of access to capital we must do all we can to expand opportunity for businesswomen. H.R. 1497 is a solid step in that direction.

Let me once again thank TOM UDALL and all of my colleagues for their hard work. I am proud to stand with them in support of H.R. 1497.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURR of North Carolina). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1497, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1497.