

MARCH 18, 1999.

Hon. JOHN ASHCROFT,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR ASHCROFT: The American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Pork Producers Council commend you for your efforts to help pork producers who have suffered due to the lowest prices since the Great Depression.

We support your amendment to the FY 1999 supplemental appropriations bill, which would provide \$150 million to USDA for additional aid to hog farmers. As you well know, U.S. pork producers lost over \$2.5 billion in equity in 1998 and are expected to lose another \$1 billion in equity in 1999. The nation's pork producers are facing another difficult year due to continued depressed prices and are looking to Congress for direction with regard to the recent economic disaster faced by the U.S. pork industry.

AFBF and NPPC appreciate your efforts on behalf of the nation's pork producers and look forward to working with you on behalf of agriculture.

Sincerely,

DEAN KLECKNER,
President, American
Farm Bureau Fed-
eration.

JOHN MCNUTT,
President, National
Pork Producers
Council.●

EXTENDING THE PERIOD FOR WHICH CHAPTER 12 OF TITLE 11, UNITED STATES CODE, IS REEN- ACTED

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of H.R. 808, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 808) to extend for 6 additional months the period for which chapter 12 of title 11, United States Code, is reenacted.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed at the appropriate place in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 808) was considered read the third time and passed.

AMENDING THE SMALL BUSINESS ACT

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of H.R. 774, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 774) to amend the Small Business Act to change the conditions of participation and provide an authorization of appropriations for the women's business center program.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, today we in the United States Senate have an opportunity to take an important step in strengthening the Women's Business Center Program at the Small Business Administration. The "Women's Business Center Amendment Act of 1999" authorizes SBA to make grants totaling up to \$11 million annually to Women's Business Centers throughout the United States.

During the past decade, the number of women-owned small businesses has exploded. Women-owned small businesses are the fastest growing segment of our nation's business community. Years ago, there was an advertising campaign slogan proclaiming that women "had come a long way." I find that slogan very applicable to the plateau now reached by women entrepreneurs. During this time, women business owners have established themselves as a key component of our small business community, which has been the engine driving our economy during the 1990's.

The research foundation arm of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) has conducted studies which show that women no longer are having more trouble than men obtaining bank loans. However, obtaining a loan does not guarantee a business' success. In fact, many small businesses that start out well capitalized end up failing. Success of a small business is usually dependent on the owner's management capabilities. Women's Business Centers offer help to women entrepreneurs who are looking to start a business or who already have a business by providing them with business and education training, including marketing, finance, and management assistance.

For the past three years, I have worked with Senator DOMENICI Senator KERRY, and members of the Committee on Small Business first to save and later to expand the Women's Business Center Program. In 1996, when the Administration sought to zero-out the budget for the program, I helped lead the effort to earmark funds for the program within the SBA FY 1997 budget. Senator DOMENICI, Senator KERRY and I sponsored the "Women's Business Centers Act of 1997," which expanded the program from \$4 million to \$8 million per year. This bill was incorporated into the "Small Business Reauthorization Act of 1997" (Public Law 105-135).

Last year, I sponsored the "Year 2000 Readiness and Small Business Programs Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998," which included an increase from \$8 million to \$12 million and made other reforms in the Women's Business Center Program. This bill passed the Senate unanimously; unfortunately,

the House of Representatives was not able to act on the bill before Congress adjourned. In light of the pressing demand to expand the authorization for the Women's Business Center Program, I applaud the Chairman of the House Committee on Small Business, JIM TALENT, and the Committee's ranking Democrat, NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ, for their efforts to push through House-passage of the bill so quickly this year.

The "Women's Business Center Amendments Act of 1999" brings us a giant step closer to achieving our goal of having at least one Women's Business Center up and running in each of the 50 states. Under this bill, SBA will be able to continue to fund the existing 35 eligible Centers and provide seed funding to new eligible applicant Centers in states not yet served by the program.

The bill authorizes \$11 million for Fiscal Year 2000 for the Women's Business Center Program; however, the Administration has requested \$9 million. This summer I intend to work closely with Senator KERRY on legislation to allow Women's Business Centers that have completed their initial three or five year Women's Business Center grants with SBA to apply for another five year grant to allow them to be able to continue to provide the high level of service they are currently delivering to women small business owners. Our initiative may require an increase in SBA's budget for the Women's Business Center Program for FY 2000, and I intend to study very closely the financial needs of the program. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I will urge my colleagues to support an increase in the FY 2000 budget for the program, if necessary, that will allow it to expand and meet the needs of the growing number of women-owned small businesses. I strongly believe we must pursue this course even if that means pushing for an increase above the amount requested in the President's budget request.

Mr. President, it is critical that the Senate vote to approve the "women's Business Center Act of 1999," so that the Federal government can continue to help make small business ownership a reality for women entrepreneurs. I urge my colleagues to support this important bill.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today the Senate will vote on H.R. 774, the Women's Business Center Amendments Act of 1999. This bill will make small but important changes to the Women's Business Center program. First, similar to the bill that Senator CLELAND and I introduced last Congress, it will raise the authorization for the centers from \$8 million to \$11 million. Secondly, the bill changes the matching requirements for centers; instead of raising two non-Federal dollars for every Federal dollar in the third, fourth and fifth years, centers will only be required to raise one non-Federal dollar for every one Federal dollar. I

support this bill, thought I would prefer that the authorization and funding were increased to \$12 million to make it consistent with the legislation our Committee passed last year. This program has been very successful in helping women start and grow businesses and it deserves generous funding.

Women-owned businesses are increasing in number, range, diversity and earning power. They constitute more than one-third of the 20 million small businesses in the United States, and account for some \$3 trillion in annual revenues to the economy. Addressing the special needs of women-owned businesses serves not only entrepreneurs, but also the economic strength of this nation as a whole.

This bill further ensures that new and potential women business owners, who otherwise might be excluded from the economic mainstream of society, are afforded every opportunity to succeed through the Small Business Administration's Women's Business Centers program.

Centers are faced with the challenging task of teaching business basics and providing practical support and realistic encouragement. Massachusetts has an excellent example of a Women's Business Center—the Center for Women & Enterprise (CWE) in Boston. Andrea Silbert is a tireless executive director who effectively raises money, forges partnerships and designs thorough training and mentoring programs to help women entrepreneurs. When CWE trains an entrepreneur, she learns how to approach a lender for a loan, learns how to manage her business, and gains an understanding of the hows and whys of marketing. Nationwide, women should have access to this type of quality, comprehensive training.

It is clear that the centers are having a positive social and economic impact on the lives of many women and the communities which they serve. New clients continue to be racially and ethnically diverse: Some 40 percent are members of minority groups. About half are married, and half are single, widowed, divorced, or separated.

While this bill addresses some important issues, I am concerned about the unresolved problem of sustainability. How can established, effective centers that are at the end of the five-year Federal funding cycle continue to provide the same quality of services without the Federal contribution? It's their bread and butter, and it's indispensable leverage that helps centers raise the obligatory matching funding.

Agnes Noonan, executive director of the Women's Economic Self-Sufficiency Team (WESST corp.) in New Mexico recently reinforced this point when she testified before the Senate Committee on Small Business. With an 89 percent growth in the number of women-owned businesses over the last decade and a 161 percent increase in revenues, it is sound economic policy for the Federal government to support

programs which facilitate the training and development of women business owners. It follows that we would be wise to safeguard the investment that has been made to date in the infrastructure of women's business centers around the country.

I believe we should find a fair way to let these centers recompute for the base funding. And we should do it this calendar year, before it's too late and the centers have lost their Federal funding and are out of business. I will be introducing a bill to allow Women's Business Centers to recompute for Federal funding in mid-April, when we return from the Easter recess. I hope that my colleagues with strong Women's Business Centers in their states will join me in sponsoring recompetition legislation.

Mr. President, I thank my colleagues for their continuing efforts to expand policies that allow women entrepreneurs to grow and thrive.

Mr. CRAPO. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time, and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed at the appropriate place in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 774) was considered read a third time and passed.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.J. RES. 26, H.J. RES. 27, H.J. RES. 28

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed en bloc to the consideration of the following resolutions which are at the desk: H.J. Res. 26, H.J. Res. 27, and H.J. Res. 28. I further ask consent that the Senate proceed to their consideration en bloc, and I further ask consent that the joint resolutions be read the third time and passed, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, and the above occur en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REAPPOINTMENT OF BARBER B. CONABLE, JR. TO THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 26) providing for the reappointment of Barber B. Conable, Jr. as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution.

The joint resolution (H.J. Res. 26) was considered read the third time and passed.

REAPPOINTMENT OF DR. HANNA H. GRAY TO THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the next resolution.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 27) providing for the reappointment of Dr. Hanna H. Gray as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution.

The joint resolution (H.J. Res. 27) was considered read the third time and passed.

REAPPOINTMENT OF WESLEY S. WILLIAMS, JR. TO THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the next resolution.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 28) providing for the reappointment of Wesley S. Williams, Jr. as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution.

The joint resolution (H.J. Res. 28) was considered read the third time and passed.

ORDER FOR STAR PRINT

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the report to accompany S. 92 be star printed with the changes that are at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXPRESSING THE SUPPORT OF THE SENATE FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES WHO ARE ENGAGED IN MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution submitted earlier today by Senator LOTT regarding support of troops engaged in military operations in Yugoslavia be considered agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that all Senators be added as cosponsors of the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 74) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

Whereas the President has authorized United States participation in NATO military operations against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;

Whereas up to 22,000 members of the Armed Forces are presently involved in operations in and around the Balkans region with the active participation of NATO and other coalition forces; and

Whereas the Senate and the American people have the greatest pride in the members of the Armed Forces and strongly support them: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate supports the members of the United States Armed Forces who are engaged in military operations against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and recognizes their professionalism, dedication, patriotism, and courage.