

sector businesses and tailor curricula to the needs of the community.

At a time when newly graduated students are seeing higher unemployment rates than the broader labor force, small businesses that rely on certain skills are still unable to find qualified workers. By directing small business development centers and women's business centers to provide educational information to small businesses about career and technical education programs, this bill will go a long way in meeting the labor needs of small businesses and also giving the graduates of CTE programs the tools they need to launch and grow their own successful startups.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman WILLIAMS, Mr. OLSZEWSKI, Mr. BRESNAHAN, and Mr. TRAN for their work on this bipartisan bill. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1642 to bring necessary solutions to all small businesses, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGARVEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. TRAN).

Mr. TRAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1642, the Connecting Small Businesses with Career and Technical Education Graduates Act.

Small businesses can't thrive if they can't access a highly qualified workforce. This legislation will help small business owners connect with graduates of vocational programs and hire employees who can help their businesses thrive.

Talented graduates come out of vocational education programs in my district, like Coastline College in Fountain Valley, and have the skills that small businesses in Orange County need.

This bill will help ensure graduates of career and technical education programs find good-paying jobs that they are already trained for. It is pro-small business, pro-students, pro-workforce, and pro-economic growth. It is a win for everyone.

I am proud to co-lead H.R. 1642. I thank my colleagues, Chairman WILLIAMS and Congressmen OLSZEWSKI and BRESNAHAN, for their leadership in championing this important piece of legislation. I urge my colleagues to vote "yes."

Mr. MCGARVEY. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

I thank my colleagues, Chairman WILLIAMS, Mr. OLSZEWSKI, Mr. BRESNAHAN, and Mr. TRAN, for their bipartisan effort to ensure small businesses have access to the skilled workforce coming out of local career and technical education programs.

For years, small businesses have raised concerns about their ability to find workers with the best skills to staff their businesses. By leveraging our small business development centers and women's business centers, we can

help connect promising graduates of CTE programs to small businesses in need. Moreover, we can help those graduates start and grow their own businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 1642, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1642.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays. The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

WOSB ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1816) to establish requirements relating to certification of small business concerns owned and controlled by women for certain purposes, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1816

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 "WOSB Accountability Act".

SEC. 2. EXCLUSION OF SELF-CERTIFIED SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS OWNED AND CONTROLLED BY WOMEN FROM GOALS.

(a) EXCLUSION OF SELF-CERTIFIED WOSBS FROM GOVERNMENTWIDE AND AGENCY GOALS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 15(g) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 644(g)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(4) EXCLUSION OF SELF-CERTIFIED WOSBS FROM GOALS.—Only small business concerns owned and controlled by women that have been certified under section 8(m)(2)(E) shall be included in calculating the goals established—

"(A) under paragraph (1)(A)(v); and

"(B) by the head of a Federal agency for small business concerns owned and controlled by women under paragraph (2)."

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on the first day after the end of the second fiscal year beginning after the Administrator issues the regulations required under subsection (b)(2).

(b) REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO SELF-CERTIFIED WOSBS.—

(1) INCLUSION OF CERTAIN SELF-CERTIFIED WOSBS IN GOALS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a small business concern described in subparagraph (B) shall be

deemed to have been certified by the Administrator or a national certifying entity approved by the Administrator under section 8(m) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(m)) as a small business concern owned and controlled by women under paragraph (2)(E) of such section (15 U.S.C. 637(m)(2)(E)) for the purposes of calculating the goals described in paragraph (4) of section 15(g) of the such Act (as added by subsection (a) of this Act) until the Administrator or such a national certifying entity make a determination with respect to the certification of such concern.

(B) SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS DESCRIBED.—A small business concern described in this subparagraph is a small business concern—

(i) that is self-certified as a small business concern owned and controlled by women as of the date on which the amendments made by subsection (a) take effect;

(ii) that files a certification application with the Administrator or a national certifying entity approved by the Administrator under section 8(m) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(m)) prior to such date; and

(iii) for which the Administrator or such a national certifying entity does not make a determination prior to such date regarding certification pursuant to such certification application.

(2) RULEMAKING.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall issue regulations carrying out this section.

(c) QUARTERLY BRIEFINGS REQUIRED.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and on a quarterly basis thereafter until the date specified in subsection (b), the Administrator shall provide to the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committee Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate a briefing on the implementation of the requirements of this section. Such briefings shall include—

(1) the total number of small business concerns expected to seek certification as a small business concern owned and controlled by women;

(2) the number of applications for certification pending with the Administrator or a national certifying entity approved by the Administrator under section 8(m) of the Small Business Act during the period covered by the briefing;

(3) the total number of applications approved by the Administrator or such a national certifying entity since the date of the enactment of this Act;

(4) the timelines associated with processing such applications by the Administrator or such a national certifying entity between submission and approval;

(5) the administrative costs to the Administration to make determinations on such applications and the estimated cost to such applicant to seek certification from a national certifying entity;

(6) a discussion of the Administrator's current and future outreach efforts to small business concerns owned and controlled by women and to Federal agencies on the requirements of this Act; and

(7) recommendations for additional legislative authority or resources required to fully implement the requirements of this Act.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) ADMINISTRATION.—The term "Administration" means the Small Business Administration.

(2) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term "Administrator" means the Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

(3) SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN.—The term "small business concern" has the meaning given under section 3 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632).

(4) **SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN OWNED AND CONTROLLED BY WOMEN.**—The term “small business concern owned and controlled by women” has the meaning given the term in section 8(m) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(m)).

(e) **NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.**—No additional funds are authorized to carry out the requirements of this Act and the amendments made by this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) and the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. MCGARVEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1816, the WOSB Accountability Act, introduced by the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. MCGARVEY), the gentleman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ), and the gentleman from New York (Mr. LALOTA).

H.R. 1816 prohibits agencies from counting self-certified women-owned small business contractors, otherwise known as WOSBs, toward an agency's women-owned small business contracting goals.

The committee has repeatedly found that programs that allow self-certification are far more susceptible to waste, fraud, and abuse. After years of hard work removing self-certification from other contracting goals, this bill is an opportunity to remove it from one of the two remaining statutorily defined small business contracting goals.

I am proud of this committee's work to remove self-certification in other programs, such as service-disabled veteran-owned small business contractors. Now, it is time to do the same with the WOSB program to help ensure integrity across SBA programs.

While we continue to have conversations on how to better align small businesses' contracting goals with merit-based principles, this bill would reduce the ability of fraudsters to exploit the system that is currently in place.

By mitigating the ability to defraud government contracts, we help ensure that taxpayer dollars are used as intended and help create a more level playing field between the WOSB program and other small business set-aside programs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to vote for H.R. 1816, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

In recent years, both SBA and Congress have directed changes to the small business contracting programs to increase accountability and ensure proper use. The WOSB Accountability Act will continue this work by moving the Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract Program to full SBA certification.

This bill is important to ensure that the Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract Program works as intended, assists the companies as intended, and, ultimately, levels the playing field for women-owned firms competing for government contracts as intended.

The data shows that women are starting and running new small businesses, generating revenue and jobs in their communities, and growing in increasingly diverse industries, but fewer and fewer are signing up to work with the government. Again, many more are leaving.

Women-owned small businesses continue to make up a strikingly small share of Federal contracts, and the government continues to fail to meet the 5 percent goal of contracting dollars that Congress set three decades ago.

Better leveraging the Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract Program to recruit and retain more small firms strengthens the entire industrial base, promotes competition, and drives innovation.

Mr. Speaker, passing this bill today will do that. I urge all Members to support it, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. LALOTA).

Mr. LALOTA. Mr. Speaker, the fundamental question this bill addresses is: Should a Federal contract intended for women go to men and fraudsters, or should a Federal contract intended for women-owned small businesses actually go to women?

Fortunately, even though we Republicans and Democrats disagree on a lot in this Chamber, we agree that the contracts meant for women should go to women.

Yet, right now, under Federal law, companies can simply self-certify—check a box claiming to be a woman-owned small business—and still count toward the Federal Government's goals.

That means bad actors can game the system, take contracts they don't deserve, and rob real women entrepreneurs of the opportunities meant for them. That is wrong, and that is exactly the kind of Washington loophole I am working to close.

Self-certification invites fraud. In fact, the Small Business Administration's own inspector general has repeatedly warned about the risks of fraud under self-certification. This was especially apparent with the SBA's COVID-19 lending programs, where

fraudulent self-certification led to billions of dollars in losses.

That is why I am proud to support the WOSB Accountability Act, a bipartisan effort that ensures contracts meant for women go to women.

This legislation is straightforward, Mr. Speaker. It puts an end to the days of businesses just claiming they are women-owned without having to prove it.

Under this bill, only certified and verified women-owned small businesses would count toward the Federal Government's contracting goals, just like it should be. It is high time we address this issue and empower women in business by ensuring the system works for them, not against them.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Ranking Member VELÁZQUEZ, my fellow New Yorker, for partnering with me on this important piece of legislation. It is time we stop allowing fraudsters to steal opportunities meant for legitimate women entrepreneurs. I urge all of my colleagues to support the WOSB Accountability Act.

Mr. MCGARVEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ), the distinguished ranking member of the Small Business Committee.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, in 1994, Congress established a goal of awarding 5 percent of Federal contracting dollars to women-owned small businesses. Recognizing the obstacles that female entrepreneurs faced when entering and competing in the Federal marketplace, Congress identified this goal as an uphill battle. Three decades later, we can see how much of an understatement that was and how much more work has to be done.

Empowering female entrepreneurs has long been a top priority of mine. In 2000, to give women-owned firms a boost and incentivize agencies to bring in more WOSBs to compete for contracts, I wrote the law and created the WOSB program.

Today, many women-owned firms are critical partners to Federal agencies as a result of that law, yet the WOSB goal has been met only twice, and women-owned firms are not seeing the contracting opportunities that should accompany their level of participation in the market. We need to again provide a boost to the WOSB program and encourage more competition and success for WOSB firms.

My legislation that we are considering today will move more firms through the SBA's certification process so Federal agencies have a larger pool of companies that can trigger WOSB competitions.

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Mr. Speaker, it will further protect the integrity of the program. We want to ensure that women-owned firms are who they say they are because that is who the program is designed to empower.

We expect that contracting officers will have more confidence working

with WOSBs, knowing that the SBA has already verified them.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support this bill.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGARVEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. LALOTA) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) for their work on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I close by thanking the ranking member from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) for her leadership on this bill and her many years of work to create, strengthen, and enhance the Women-Owned Small Business program. I am pleased to support this bill and encourage all of my colleagues to do the same.

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

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1816, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PLAIN LANGUAGE IN CONTRACTING ACT

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 787) to require plain language and the inclusion of key words in covered notices that are clear, concise, and accessible to small business concerns, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 787

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 “Plain Language in Contracting Act”.

SEC. 2. ACCESSIBILITY AND CLARITY IN COVERED NOTICES FOR SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Each covered notice shall be written in a manner—

(1) such that a small business concern can easily understand the intent of the covered notice; and

(2) that—

(A) is clear, concise, and well-organized; and

(B) to the maximum extent practicable, follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field of the covered notice and the intended audience of the covered notice.

(b) INCLUSION OF KEY WORDS IN COVERED NOTICES.—Each covered notice shall, to the maximum extent practicable, include key words in the description of the covered no-

tice such that a small business concern seeking contract opportunities using the single, Government-wide point of entry described under section 1708 of title 41, United States Code, can easily identify and understand such covered notice.

(c) RULEMAKING.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration shall issue rules to carry out this section.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) COVERED NOTICE.—The term “covered notice” means a notice pertaining to small business concerns published by a Federal agency on the single Government-wide point of entry described under section 1708 of title 41, United States Code.

(2) SMALL BUSINESS ACT DEFINITIONS.—The terms “Federal agency” and “small business concern” have the meanings given those terms, respectively, in section 3 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632).

SEC. 3. NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.

No additional funds are authorized to carry out the requirements of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) and the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. MCGARVEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 787, the Plain Language in Contracting Act, introduced by Representatives LALOTA, THANEDAR, and TRAN.

The Plain Language in Contracting Act is a vital piece of legislation designed to limit the cumbersome language used in government contract solicitations. This will empower small businesses to have a greater ability to compete for valuable government contracts.

The number of small businesses contracting with the government has been shrinking for years, and over the past few years the Committee on Small Business has heard firsthand that excessive red tape and unclear government-speak have made working and contracting with the government more difficult and costly for small businesses.

Currently, government contract solicitations are written in an overly complex way that is difficult to navigate unless someone is an attorney or contract specialist. One study found that only 3 percent of government contracts are written in a way that someone without a college degree could understand.

Small businesses often lack the resources to hire an army of attorneys

and contract specialists needed to fully understand these contracts, which creates difficulties in submitting successful bids. The wonky nature of this so-called government-speak has contributed to the shocking loss of small businesses in government contracting.

H.R. 787 will finally remove this unnecessary barrier facing small businesses by forcing the government to take commonsense action and write contract solicitations using simple, plain language.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 787, the Plain Language in Contracting Act, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues, Representatives LALOTA and TRAN, for their work on this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the complexity of the government's procurement process and requirements can be overwhelming to small businesses, including those seeking a Federal contract for the first time.

This government-speak, words we only find in government contracting documents like requests for proposals or solicitations, compound the complexity and may disincentivize firms from bidding.

This bill attempts to add clarity by requiring documents to be written in a plain way that helps firms more easily understand what the government is buying.

Small firms should not be put off from working with the government because available opportunities are not communicated clearly. We need more small businesses to bring their talent and innovation into Federal agencies, and I am hopeful this bill will contribute to that effort.

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

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. LALOTA).

Mr. LALOTA. Mr. Speaker, America's small businesses shouldn't have to hire a lawyer to apply for and win a simple government contract. Yet that is exactly what Washington's bureaucratic process demands today.

That is why I am honored to champion the Plain Language in Contracting Act, which will reduce the burden on small businesses when trying to secure government contracts.

My legislation ensures Federal agencies use clear, straightforward language in solicitations, thereby removing barriers, increasing transparency, and giving small businesses a fair shot.

Time and again, small business owners tell us the government contracting process is so complex, they ultimately walk away. Bidding on a contract is hard enough, but when the language is challenging and understanding it requires an advanced degree, it is easy to see why.

A study conducted by the Naval Postgraduate School, which analyzed 1 million DOD contracts, found less than 3