



2023 NAWBO Advocacy Agenda Talking Points

GENERAL BACKGROUND

- The National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) members are diverse in many ways, including the size of their business, the sector, the stage of business development, and political affiliation.
- NAWBO advocates for women business owners regardless of political affiliation, encouraging and supporting bipartisan legislation focused on building and strengthening a sustainable business economy.
- For NAWBO to endorse specific legislation, the legislation must go through a litmus test. NAWBO generally endorses bipartisan legislation that builds coalitions, is supported by data, and advances the women business community.
- As the 118th Congress begins, the NAWBO Advocacy agenda embodies the ever-present need to create both the avenue and environment to build sustainable women-owned businesses.

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF THE "MICROBUSINESS" AND ENCOURAGING EMERGING ENTREPRENEURS

BACKGROUND DATA: *NAWBO's most recent survey shows that nearly 92% of women-owned businesses are microbusinesses. While the businesses may be small, they provide the lion's share of the family income, with 63% of businesses providing 50-100% of the household income. By giving these businesses the resources to grow, we will see an opportunity to increase wealth in our most underserved populations.*

ASK OF CONGRESS

- **Congress needs to codify a definition of a microbusiness.**
 - NAWBO believes that any business with 25 or fewer employees and less than a million dollars in annual revenue should qualify as a microbusiness.
 - This definition will be utilized by all federal agencies to better support access to capital and contracting opportunities.
- **Congress must ensure fair and equitable access for microbusinesses.**
 - Congress should create a set aside specifically for the microbusiness owners within the SBA loan programs. According to our most recent survey, only 18% of women-owned businesses have over a million dollars in annual revenue.
 - A set aside geared explicitly toward these women-owned microbusinesses will improve their access to these vital funds.
- **Congress should study the needs of microbusinesses to better understand federal contracting and procurement solutions for these entrepreneurs.**
 - With a strong understanding of the contracting needs of microbusinesses, Congress will be better positioned to establish federal microbusiness contracting goals.
 - With advances in technology, microbusinesses can be fully functional and have the capacity to successfully execute federal contracts despite having fewer employees.
- **Congress must make access to technology and digital tools available on the federal level and publicized to help women business owners expand their market share.**
 - Of the women-owned businesses surveyed, nearly 80% of women business owners currently have and are interested in expanding their access to marketing assistance and lead generation through technology and social media.

WORKFORCE

BACKGROUND DATA: *Small business owners have unique workforce needs compared to their larger competitors. According to our most recent survey, the number of women-owned firms with employees dropped from 2022 to 2023. And while women-owned businesses continue to struggle more than ever with hiring, losing potential hires to competitors has become a more significant barrier to acquiring talent. As our women business owners look to build and retain a robust, diverse, and well-skilled workforce that also allows them to stay competitive in the marketplace, we urge Congress to consider the unique concerns of the small business workforce.*

ASK OF CONGRESS

- **Congress must understand the unique workforce needs of women small business owners.**
 - 71% of women business owner respondents in our most recent survey utilize anywhere from 1 to 11+ contractors, with over 60% of these contract workers providing year-round support.
 - NAWBO believes Congress should look at ways to ensure that small businesses can continue to thrive by utilizing independent contractors as a critical component of their workforce.
- **NAWBO urges Congress to consider legislation that can help small businesses offer their employees benefits by increasing access to existing federal and state benefits portals.**
 - The pandemic caused many workers to reevaluate their priorities and focus more on work-life balance, flexibility, and mental health. Small businesses lack the resources to offer extensive benefits packages, leaving them unprepared to compete for talent in a tight labor market.
- **NAWBO hopes Congress can work toward a bipartisan solution that gives small businesses an option to access a paid leave system that works financially for themselves and their workforce.**
 - Policies that include support for self-employed individuals and working families through programs like paid family leave help address the economic needs of our business owners and workforce while at the same time helping ensure small business owners can compete against their larger counterparts.
 - Yet the ability to offer paid leave remains out of reach for most small business owners, with over 45% of those surveyed reporting the costs of providing paid family leave benefits are too high. Indeed, according to our most recent survey, only one in four women business owners offer paid family leave.
 - However, there is support for an opt-in, national Paid Family Leave policy.

ACCESSING CAPITAL THROUGH INCREASED FINANCIAL LITERACY EDUCATION AND DIGITAL TOOLS

BACKGROUND DATA:

Although women-owned businesses surveyed have been in business on average for 14 years, fewer than a third reported having a credit rating. In the last year, most women-owned businesses used personal savings, private loans, and loans from family and friends to finance their business. 45% of these business owners still process payroll by hand using spreadsheets.

ASK OF CONGRESS

- **Lawmakers must investigate viable ways to educate women and minorities on developing long-standing relationships with financial institutions.**
 - Establishing open communication with local and national banks and other financial institutions available to finance small businesses is critical.
 - All entrepreneurial development programs offered by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), such as Women Business Centers (WBCs), Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), and SCORE, should host events and otherwise create pathways for WBOs to connect WBOs with financial institutions to form these much-needed relationships.

- Whether investing in software programs for payroll or seeking guidance on utilizing social media tools, our business owners need to understand how to capitalize on extra funding to grow their businesses.

CARING FOR THE BUSINESS OWNER AND CAREGIVING FLEXIBILITIES FOR THE EMPLOYEE

BACKGROUND DATA:

More than ever, our nation understands the need for a sound healthcare system and acknowledges a concerted effort is needed to address the cost of healthcare for small business owners and their employees.

ASK OF CONGRESS

- **Congress must continue to address small businesses' healthcare costs.**
 - While health plans are more common among larger companies, the price remains crucial for small businesses offering healthcare coverage, with 42% saying that costs are simply too high.
- **NAWBO believes Congress should also understand the importance of investing in our business owners and their employees' physical and mental health and wellness.**
 - NAWBO believes we can accomplish this through expanded opportunities for telemedicine, mental health priorities, and championing efforts that provide pathways for sustainability without added regulatory or fiscal impact on businesses.
- **Lawmakers must realize that business owners must offer themselves and their employees the flexibility to care for their loved ones.**
 - A large portion of women business owners juggle their businesses alongside caregiving responsibilities, or they hire employees who are caregivers.
 - We urge lawmakers to understand how caregiving responsibilities factor into the daily activities of small business owners as they craft legislation to strengthen economic support for small businesses.