



WIPP WORKS IN WASHINGTON – By Ann Sullivan
Finishing 2012 With a Win: A Big Victory for Women-Owned Businesses
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As is my customary practice, I usually devote the December article to a list for Santa from the policy team. But something intervened that is much more important and required a break from tradition.

In what can best be described as a gift from the soon to be retired Senator Snowe and the current Chair of the Senate Small Business & Entrepreneurship Committee, the Women Owned Small Business (WOSB) Federal Contracting program has a new lease on life. As you may recall, the original law put a \$4 million and \$6.5 million cap on awards to women owned businesses under the program. The feedback from the contracting community was that these caps were too small, thereby hampering the program.

So, there was only one solution—lift the caps. As you know, getting anything passed these days is a minor miracle given the fierce partisanship in the Congress. But, in a bipartisan fashion, Senator Snowe and Senator Landrieu worked together to correct this problem for women who strive to be successful federal contractors. And they tacked it onto a piece of legislation that is considered a “must pass” –the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). These two Senators worked for months to get an agreement for its inclusion in the bill because the Armed Services Committee that writes this bill focuses more about tanks and missiles and troops than they do small business contracting. But to its credit, the Senate Armed Services Committee saw the wisdom in changing this inequity.

Enter the House Small Business Committee, which advised its colleagues in the House Armed Services Committee to agree to the WOSB amendment in the Senate bill. Thankfully, the House Armed Services Committee accepted its recommendation. Now, the bill goes to the President for its signature and, when signed, will give women owned businesses a real shot at getting their fair share of government contracts.

Not to be excluded from this conversation, was the contribution of WIPP’s coalition partners, friends in the small business community and members. Within a space of 24 hours, 52 organizations signed onto a letter to the conference, advocating for this change to the WOSB program. In the next 24 hours, WIPP members called and wrote their Senators to urge their support.

This is a perfect example of how pulling together as one community, the small business community can move mountains. Even though this change only affects women owned businesses, it should be noted that minority groups and small business organizations advocated for this change with one voice. As a result, women owned businesses are better off than they were yesterday. And in 2012, with a slowing rebounding recovery, that spells victory.