



WIPP WORKS IN WASHINGTON

Women Business Owners Make Their Voice Heard
By Ann Sullivan, WIPP Government Relations

We usually highlight a policy issue in this column, but it seemed important that we recognize the celebration of [National Small Business Week](#) and the contribution women business owners make to our economy, our families and our communities.

National Small Business Week, celebrated May 12-16, pays tribute to the 28.2 million small businesses and the owners that take the risk, create jobs and produce goods and services that make America the world's largest economy. Making up more than one quarter of that number is America's thriving women's business community that continues to grow and succeed while contributing more than \$1 trillion to the economy.

Part of that success can be attributed to a policy environment that supports growth. More women than ever are starting their own businesses—and at twice the rate of the rest of the country.

Fourteen years ago, when WIPP was first established, women business owners did not have a seat at the policy table. Today, WIPP is a leader in the advocacy community with a regular presence on Capitol Hill, at the federal agencies, and with the Administration. This is all thanks to women entrepreneurs, and the organizations representing them, banding together to present a united voice. The past year has been a success for our advocacy, and it is only fitting that it marked the 25th anniversary of H.R. 5050, the historic legislation that embodied a first step to supporting entrepreneurial women in the political world.

Our policy achievements were most notable in providing women access to federal contracting—where, for the first time, contracts awarded through the Women-Owned Small Business Procurement Program were not be capped at \$6.5 million dollars. As the program approaches \$250 million in contracts awarded since FY2011, the removal of these dollar caps makes \$1 billion in the coming years a realistic opportunity. WIPP will continue to push to make it a reality.

Capital available to women business owners is slowly improving including another record year of lending from the Small Business Administration. But it's not nearly enough. WIPP's most recent [Annual Survey](#) found that women still must make two attempts to secure capital. That's a whole lot better than in previous years, but the regulatory environment continues to make small business lending difficult. This is an area we must continue to press the Congress, the President, state and local policy makers and stakeholders to support women in their efforts grow their businesses.

Although the rollout of individual health insurance was a disaster, the fact remains that for the first time, small businesses will be able to pool statewide to offer health insurance through the Small Business Health Option Plans (SHOP) marketplaces. In October 2014, online enrollment will begin. We need these marketplaces to work and the online enrollment to be easy.

And our efforts cannot stop there. We will never rest. WIPP will continue to work – with more policy ideas to increase capital access for women to either start or grow a business. We are pushing for a tax code that is both simpler and fairer for women business owners. We are working with Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle to ensure that healthcare reform continues in a sustainable and effective manner. Our procurement efforts include enhancing the WOSB procurement program by giving it parity with all other small business procurement programs including sole source authority.

Another issue we need to tackle is positioning women business owners to take advantage of the global marketplace. Our efforts remain focused on establishing a streamlined process for exporting goods and services that maintains protections on women's innovations and business investments.

WIPP is excited to celebrate this week the indelible contribution of America's small business to this country. The women's business community can be proud of their significant role in this larger community. But amid our celebration we will use this week to trumpet policy ideas that will further our success and ensure we are celebrating next year just as loudly.