

while increasing the risk they take on, and processing change orders slows down other parts of the project, jeopardizing the ability of contractors to meet their obligations.

All of this results in significant financial burdens on contractors, often ending in bankruptcy. This is particularly true when liquidity is slim and the burden of insurance and licensures is high.

H.R. 4754 provides much-needed certainty to prospective Federal construction contractors and subcontractors so they can appropriately plan their operations before submitting their bid for Federal work. This level of transparency is vital to securing the survival of small construction contractors.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of the Members to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, before I yield to the principal sponsor of this legislation, Mr. BACON, I would like to thank my colleague STEVE KNIGHT from California for working on this as well; and also AL LAWSON from Florida, and also STEPHANIE MURPHY from Florida. So we have two Republicans and two Democrats again working together on this on behalf of small businesses all across the country, and I want to thank all four of those Members for their leadership on this on both sides of the aisle.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BACON).

Mr. BACON. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman CHABOT for his leadership for the part of our country that is the engine of our economy, small businesses, of which 47 percent of our American workers are a part. So we appreciate his leadership.

I also want to thank the ranking member for her support of this bill. I appreciate the bipartisan effort to get this bill done. In fact, they both summarized the benefits of this bill very well.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 4754, the Change Order Transparency for Federal Contractors Act.

This bill is a commonsense, preventative measure designed to protect small businesses from loss by providing them with critical information up front, prior to submitting a bid on a Federal construction project. Ultimately, and this is the bottom line, this legislation is about the Federal Government paying its bills on time.

Currently, small businesses are flying blind. Before they bid, they have no knowledge of an agency's change order process or history of payment. Construction is an inherently complex industry that inevitably requires changes to the original plan. Construction contractors must deal with this inevitability, but without knowledge of their customer's business practices, they cannot formulate accurate offers or sufficiently plan their operations

prior to bidding. As a result, they may unknowingly place their business in jeopardy by working with an agency with a poor track record of timely payment.

This is not a hypothetical problem. In our committee, we have heard businesses over and over again go through this problem. We have to address it. Actual businesses should not have to worry about being paid by the Federal Government on time.

While large contractors may have the resources and capital to absorb some of the loss, small businesses struggle to stay afloat as they wait for payment. In addition to financing the cost of the changed work, small businesses are forced to pay their own bills while waiting for the agency to act. This includes payroll, material costs, and even taxes. This problem is compounded and made even worse for small subcontractors, who are often the last in line to receive payment.

H.R. 4754 will provide prospective Federal construction contractors and subcontractors with the information they need prior to submitting a bid. Agencies would be required to publish, as part of their solicitation, detailed information about their change order processes and timely payment data. This information could preserve the role of small contractors as part of our industrial base by making Federal contracts more attractive to small businesses and make the process more competitive. A more competitive bidding process for Federal contractors would benefit both small businesses and taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LAWSON), who is the lead cosponsor of the bill.

Mr. LAWSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4754, the Change Order Transparency for Federal Contractors Act. This is an important piece of legislation that guarantees that small businesses have the necessary information regarding change order policies from Federal agencies.

The work of the Federal Government relies heavily on the support of our Nation's small businesses. For everything from construction of important military infrastructure to guaranteeing the proper design for Federal facilities, small businesses are at the center of infrastructure for the Federal workplace.

When taking on Federal contracts, small businesses are also taking a great risk. With Federal funds not always guaranteed in a timely fashion, change orders make the work that small businesses perform for the Federal Government complicated and unpredictable.

H.R. 4754 requires agencies to outline in a clear and defined manner the policies they have regarding change orders. This will make it easier for small businesses to compete for and understand the contracts which they are awarded.

It is vital for small-business owners to not only get a seat at the table, but to also have the same vantage point when competing for Federal contracts. This legislation will alleviate red tape and open more doors for opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to work with my colleague DON BACON on this bipartisan piece of legislation, and I encourage my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers on the bill at this time, so I reserve the balance of my time.

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

In closing, it is obvious that we must take this historic step in providing transparency in the contract modification process. As we contemplate ways to bolster our infrastructure with the goal of employing millions, H.R. 4754 provides certainty to the many small firms potentially involved in that process.

By requiring Federal agencies to prospectively notify contractors of the agency processes they would be subject to if awarded a contract, the Federal marketplace is once again attainable to small construction contractors.

It is critical that this Congress work to remove barriers preventing small firms from successfully performing Federal work and getting paid for all of the work they perform.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

In closing, this legislation provides a level of certainty for small businesses who contract with the Federal Government. It is a commonsense, bipartisan bill that benefits small firms and ought to improve efficiency within the Federal contracting arena.

Mr. Speaker, I again thank Ms. VELÁZQUEZ for her work in a bipartisan manner on this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MITCHELL). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4754.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTERS IMPROVEMENTS ACT OF 2018

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1680) to amend the Small Business Act to improve the women's business center program, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1680

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 “Women’s Business Centers Improvements Act of 2018”.

SEC. 2. AMENDMENTS TO WOMEN’S BUSINESS CENTER PROGRAM.

Section 29 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656) is amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 29. WOMEN’S BUSINESS CENTER PROGRAM.

“(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR.—The term ‘Assistant Administrator’ means the Assistant Administrator of the Office of Women’s Business Ownership established under subsection (1).

“(2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible entity’ means—

“(A) an organization described in section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of such Code;

“(B) a State, regional, or local economic development organization, so long as the organization certifies that grant funds received under this section will not be co-mingled with other funds;

“(C) an institution of higher education (as defined in section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001)), unless such institution is currently receiving a grant under section 21;

“(D) a development, credit, or finance corporation chartered by a State, so long as the corporation certifies that grant funds received under this section will not be commingled with other funds; or

“(E) any combination of entities listed in subparagraphs (A) through (D).

“(3) SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN OWNED AND CONTROLLED BY WOMEN.—The term ‘small business concern owned and controlled by women’ has the meaning given under section 3(n).

“(4) WOMEN’S BUSINESS CENTER.—The term ‘women’s business center’ means the location at which counseling and training on the management, operations (including manufacturing, services, and retail), access to capital, international trade, Government procurement opportunities, and any other matter that is needed to start, maintain, or expand a small business concern owned and controlled by women.

“(b) AUTHORITY.—

“(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established a Women’s Business Center Program under which the Administrator may provide a grant to any eligible entity to operate 1 or more women’s business centers for the benefit of small business concerns owned and controlled by women.

“(2) USE OF FUNDS.—The women’s business centers shall be designed to provide counseling and training that meets the needs of the small business concerns owned and controlled by women, especially socially or economically disadvantaged women, and shall provide—

“(A) financial assistance, including training and counseling in how to apply for and secure business credit and investment capital, preparing and presenting financial statements, and managing cash flow and other financial operations of a small business concern;

“(B) management assistance, including training and counseling in how to plan, organize, staff, direct, and control each major activity and function of a small business concern; and

“(C) marketing assistance, including training and counseling in identifying and seg-

menting domestic and international market opportunities, preparing and executing marketing plans, developing pricing strategies, locating contract opportunities, negotiating contracts, and utilizing varying public relations and advertising techniques.

“(3) TYPES OF GRANTS.—

“(A) INITIAL GRANT.—The amount of an initial grant provided under this subsection to an eligible entity shall be not more than \$185,000 (as such amount is annually adjusted by the Administrator to reflect the change in inflation).

“(B) ADDITIONAL GRANTS.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—With respect to an eligible entity that has received a grant, the Administrator may award an additional grant of up to \$65,000, to be dispersed after the expiration of the term of the initial grant under this subsection if the Administrator determines that the eligible entity—

“(I) has agreed to obtain, after its application has been approved and notice of award has been issued, cash contributions from non-Federal sources of 1 non-Federal dollar for each Federal dollar;

“(II) is in good standing with the Women’s Business Center Program; and

“(III) has met performance goals for grant term of the initial grant, if applicable.

“(ii) LIMITATIONS.—The Administrator may only award additional grants under clause (i)—

“(I) during the 3rd and 4th quarters of the grant term of the initial grant; and

“(II) from unobligated amounts made available to the Administrator to carry out this section.

“(C) CONTINUATION GRANTS.—The Administrator may award a continuation grant of up to \$150,000 to an eligible entity that received an initial grant under subparagraph (A). There shall be no limitation on the number of continuation grants an eligible entity may receive under this section.

“(c) APPLICATION.—

“(1) INITIAL GRANTS AND CONTINUATION GRANTS.—To receive an initial grant or continuation grant under this section, an eligible entity shall submit an application to the Administrator in such form, in such manner, and containing such information as the Administrator may require, including—

“(A) a certification that the eligible entity—

“(i) has designated an executive director or program manager, who may be compensated using grant funds awarded under this section or other sources, to manage the women’s business center for which a grant under subsection (b) is sought; and

“(ii) meets the accounting and reporting requirements established under guidance issued by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget for the eligible entity;

“(B) information demonstrating the experience and effectiveness of the eligible entity in—

“(i) provide counseling and training described under subsection (b)(2);

“(ii) providing training and services to a representative number of women who are socially or economically disadvantaged; and

“(iii) working with resource partners of the Administration and other entities; and

“(C) a 5-year plan that—

“(i) includes information relating to the assistance to be provided by the women’s business center in the area in which the women’s business center is located

“(ii) describes the ability of the eligible entity to meet the needs of the market to be served by the women’s business center, including the ability to fundraise to obtain the matching funds required under subsection (e)

“(iii) describes the ability of the eligible entity to provide counseling and training described under subsection (b)(2), including to

a representative number of women who are socially or economically disadvantaged.

“(2) RECORD RETENTION.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall maintain a copy of each application submitted under this subsection for not less than 5 years.

“(B) PAPERWORK REDUCTION.—The Administrator shall take steps to reduce, to the maximum extent practicable, the paperwork burden associated with carrying out subparagraph (A).

“(d) SELECTION OF ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—In selecting recipients of initial grants, the Administrator shall consider—

“(A) the experience of the applicant in providing entrepreneurial training;

“(B) the amount of time needed for the applicant to commence operation of a women’s business center;

“(C) the capacity of the applicant to meet the accreditation standards established under subsection (1)(4) in a timely manner;

“(D) the ability of the applicant to sustain operations, including its ability to obtain sufficient non-Federal funds, for a 5-year period;

“(E) the proposed location of a women’s business center to be operated by the applicant eligible entity and its proximity to Veteran Business Outreach Centers and to recipients of grants under section 8(b)(1) or 21; and

“(F) the population density of the area to be served by the women’s business center operated by the applicant eligible entity.

“(2) SELECTION CRITERIA.—

“(A) RULEMAKING.—The Administrator shall issue regulations to specify the criteria for review and selection of applicants under this subsection.

“(B) MODIFICATIONS PROHIBITED AFTER ANNOUNCEMENT.—With respect to a public announcement of any opportunity to be awarded a grant under this section made by the Administrator pursuant to subsection (j)(1), the Administrator may not modify regulations issued pursuant to subparagraph (A) with respect to such opportunity unless required to do so by an Act of Congress or an order of a Federal court.

“(C) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this clause may be construed as prohibiting the Administrator from modifying the regulations issued pursuant to subparagraph (A) (after providing an opportunity for notice and comment) as such regulations apply to an opportunity to be awarded a grant under this section that the Administrator has not yet publicly announced pursuant to subsection (j)(1).

“(e) MATCHING REQUIREMENTS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (5), upon approval of an application submitted under subsection (c), the eligible entity shall agree to obtain contributions from non-Federal sources—

“(A) in the first and second year of the term of an initial grant, if applicable, 1 non-Federal dollar for each 2 Federal dollars; and

“(B) in each year of the term of an initial grant, if applicable, 1 non-Federal dollar for each Federal dollar;

“(2) FORM OF MATCHING FUNDS.—Not more than one-half of non-Federal matching funds described under paragraph (1) may be in the form of in-kind contributions that are budget line items only, including office equipment and office space.

“(3) DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS.—The Administrator may disburse an amount not greater than 25 percent of the total amount of a grant awarded to an eligible entity before such eligible entity obtains the non-Federal matching funds described under paragraph (1).

“(4) FAILURE TO OBTAIN MATCHING FUNDS.—If an eligible entity fails to obtain the required matching funds described under paragraph (1), the eligible entity may not be eligible to receive advance disbursements pursuant to paragraph (3) during the remainder of the term, if applicable, of a grant awarded under this section. Before approving such eligible entity for an additional grant or continuation grant under this section, the Administrator shall make a written determination, including the reasons for such determination, of whether the Administrator believes that the eligible entity will be able to obtain the requisite funding under paragraph (1) for such additional grant or continuation grant.

“(5) WAIVER OF NON-FEDERAL SHARE.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Upon request by an eligible entity, and in accordance with this paragraph, the Administrator may waive, in whole or in part, the requirement to obtain non-Federal matching funds for a grant awarded under this section for the eligible entity for a fiscal year. The Administrator may not issue such a waiver for more than a total of 2 consecutive fiscal years.

“(B) CONSIDERATIONS.—In determining whether to issue a waiver under this paragraph, the Administrator shall consider—

“(i) the economic conditions affecting the eligible entity;

“(ii) the impact the waiver would have on the credibility of the Women's Business Center Program under this section;

“(iii) the demonstrated ability of the eligible entity to raise non-Federal funds; and

“(iv) the performance of the eligible entity under the initial grant.

“(C) LIMITATION.—The Administrator may not issue a waiver under this paragraph if granting the waiver would undermine the credibility of the Women's Business Center Program.

“(6) EXCESS NON-FEDERAL DOLLARS.—The amount of non-Federal dollars obtained by an eligible entity that is above the amount that is required to be obtained by the eligible entity under this subsection shall not be subject to the requirements of part 200 of title 2, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor thereto, if such amount of non-Federal dollars—

“(A) is not used as matching funds for purposes of implementing the Women's Business Center Program; and

“(B) was not obtained using funds from the Women's Business Center Program.

“(f) OTHER REQUIREMENTS.—

“(1) SEPARATION OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity shall—

“(A) operate a women's business center under this section separately from other projects, if any, of the eligible entity; and

“(B) separately maintain and account for any grants received under this section.

“(2) EXAMINATION OF ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—

“(A) REQUIRED SITE VISIT.—Before receiving an initial grant under this section, each applicant shall have a site visit by an employee of the Administration, in order to ensure that the applicant has sufficient resources to provide the services for which the grant is being provided.

“(B) ANNUAL REVIEW.—An employee of the Administration shall—

“(i) conduct an annual review of the compliance of each eligible entity receiving an initial grant under this section with the grant agreement, including a financial examination; and

“(ii) provide such review to the eligible entity as required under subsection (j)(3).

“(3) REMEDIATION OF PROBLEMS.—

“(A) PLAN OF ACTION.—If a review of an eligible entity under paragraph (2)(B) identifies any problems, the eligible entity shall, within 45 calendar days of receiving a copy of

such review, provide the Assistant Administrator with a plan of action, including specific milestones, for correcting such problems.

“(B) PLAN OF ACTION REVIEW BY THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR.—The Assistant Administrator shall review each plan of action submitted under subparagraph (A) within 30 calendar days of receiving such plan. If the Assistant Administrator determines that such plan—

“(i) will bring the eligible entity into compliance with all the terms of the grant agreement, the Assistant Administrator shall approve such plan; or

“(ii) is inadequate to remedy the problems identified in the annual review to which the plan of action relates, the Assistant Administrator shall set forth such reasons in writing and provide such determination to the eligible entity within 15 calendar days of such determination.

“(C) AMENDMENT TO PLAN OF ACTION.—An eligible entity receiving a determination under subparagraph (B)(ii) shall have 30 calendar days from the receipt of the determination to amend the plan of action to satisfy the problems identified by the Assistant Administrator and resubmit such plan to the Assistant Administrator.

“(D) AMENDED PLAN REVIEW BY THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR.—Within 15 calendar days of the receipt of an amended plan of action under subparagraph (C), the Assistant Administrator shall either approve or reject such plan and provide such approval or rejection in writing to the eligible entity.

“(E) APPEAL OF ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR DETERMINATION.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—If the Assistant Administrator rejects an amended plan under subparagraph (D), the eligible entity shall have the opportunity to appeal such decision to the Administrator, who may delegate such appeal to an appropriate officer of the Administration.

“(ii) OPPORTUNITY FOR EXPLANATION.—Any appeal described under clause (i) shall provide an opportunity for the eligible entity to provide, in writing, an explanation of why the eligible entity's amended plan remedies the problems identified in the annual review conducted under paragraph (2)(B).

“(iii) NOTICE OF DETERMINATION.—The Administrator shall provide to the eligible entity a determination of the appeal, in writing, not later than 15 calendar days after the eligible entity files an appeal under this subparagraph.

“(iv) EFFECT OF FAILURE TO ACT.—If the Administrator fails to act on an appeal made under this subparagraph within the 15-day period specified under clause (iii), the eligible entity's amended plan of action submitted under subparagraph (C) shall be deemed to be approved.

“(4) TERMINATION OF GRANT.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall terminate a grant to an eligible entity under this section if the eligible entity fails to comply with—

“(i) a plan of action approved by the Assistant Administrator under paragraph (3)(B)(i); or

“(ii) an amended plan of action approved by the Assistant Administrator under paragraph (3)(D) or approved on appeal under paragraph (3)(E).

“(B) APPEAL OF TERMINATION.—An eligible entity shall have the opportunity to challenge the termination of a grant under subparagraph (A) on the record and after an opportunity for a hearing.

“(C) FINAL AGENCY ACTION.—A determination made pursuant to subparagraph (B) shall be considered final agency action for the purposes of chapter 7 of title 5, United States Code.

“(5) SOLICITATION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an eligible entity may—

“(A) solicit cash and in-kind contributions from private individuals and entities to be used to operate a women's business center; and

“(B) use amounts made available by the Administrator under this section for the cost of such solicitation and management of the contributions received.

“(6) NOTICE AND COMMENT REQUIRED.—The Administrator may only make a change to the standards by which an eligible entity obtains or maintains grants under this section, the standards for accreditation, or any other requirement for the operation of a women's business center if the Administrator first provides notice and the opportunity for public comment, as set forth in section 553(b) of title 5, United States Code, without regard to any exceptions provided for under such section.

“(g) PROGRAM EXAMINATION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administration shall—

“(A) develop and implement an annual programmatic and financial examination of each eligible entity, under which each such eligible entity shall provide to the Administration—

“(i) an itemized cost breakdown of actual expenditures for costs incurred during the preceding year; and

“(ii) documentation regarding the amount of matching assistance from non-Federal sources obtained and expended by the eligible entity during the preceding year in order to meet the requirements of subsection (e) and, with respect to any in-kind contributions described in subsection (e)(2) that were used to satisfy the requirements of subsection (e), verification of the existence and valuation of those contributions; and

“(B) analyze the results of each such examination and, based on that analysis, make a determination regarding the programmatic and financial viability of each women's business center operated by the eligible entity.

“(2) CONDITIONS FOR CONTINUED FUNDING.—In determining whether to award a continuation grant, the Administrator—

“(A) shall consider the results of the most recent examination of the eligible entity under paragraph (1); and

“(B) shall determine if—

“(i) the eligible entity has failed to provide, or provided inadequate, information under paragraph (1)(A); or

“(ii) the eligible entity has failed to provide any information required to be provided by the women's business center for purposes of the management report under subsection (k)(1), or the information provided by the center is inadequate.

“(h) CONTRACT AUTHORITY.—

“(1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—An eligible entity that receives a grant under this section may enter into a contract with a Federal department or agency to provide specific assistance to small business concerns owned and controlled by women and other underserved small business concerns, if performance of such a contract does not hinder the ability of the eligible entity to carry out the terms of a grant received under this section.

“(2) ADMINISTRATOR.—The authority of the Administrator to enter into contracts shall be in effect for each fiscal year only to the extent and in the amounts as are provided in advance in appropriations Acts. After the Administrator has entered into a contract, either as a grant or a cooperative agreement, with any applicant under this section, the Administrator shall not suspend, terminate, or fail to renew or extend any such contract unless the Administrator provides the applicant with written notification setting forth

the reasons therefore and affords the applicant an opportunity for a hearing, appeal, or other administrative proceeding under chapter 5 of title 5, United States Code.

“(1) **PRIVACY REQUIREMENTS.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—A women’s business center may not disclose the name, address, or telephone number of any individual or small business concern receiving assistance under this section without the consent of such individual or small business concern, unless—

“(A) the Administrator is ordered to make such a disclosure by a court in any civil or criminal enforcement action initiated by a Federal or State agency; or

“(B) the Administrator considers such a disclosure to be necessary for the purpose of conducting a financial audit of a women’s business center, except that such a disclosure shall be limited to the information necessary for such audit.

“(2) **ADMINISTRATION USE OF INFORMATION.**—This subsection shall not—

“(A) restrict Administration access to women’s business center data; or

“(B) prevent the Administration from using information about individuals who use women’s business centers (other than the information described in subparagraph (A)) to conduct surveys of such individuals.

“(3) **REGULATIONS.**—The Administrator shall issue regulations to establish standards for disclosures for purposes of a financial audit under paragraph (1)(B).

“(j) **NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE WOMEN’S BUSINESS CENTER PROGRAM.**—The Administrator shall provide the following:

“(1) A public announcement of any opportunity to be awarded grants under this section, to include the selection criteria under subsection (d) and any applicable regulations.

“(2) To any applicant for a grant under this section that failed to obtain such a grant, an opportunity to debrief with the Administrator to review the reasons for the applicant’s failure.

“(3) To an eligible entity that receives an initial grant under this section, if a site visit or review of the eligible entity is carried out by an officer or employee of the Administration (other than the Inspector General), a copy of the site visit report or evaluation, as applicable, within 30 calendar days of the completion of such visit or evaluation.

“(k) **REPORTS.**—

“(1) **MANAGEMENT REPORT.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The Administrator shall prepare and submit to the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate a report on the effectiveness of women’s business centers operated through a grant awarded under this section.

“(B) **CONTENTS.**—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include information concerning, with respect to each women’s business center established pursuant to a grant awarded under this section—

“(i) the number of individuals receiving assistance;

“(ii) the number of startup business concerns formed;

“(iii) the gross receipts of assisted concerns;

“(iv) the employment increases or decreases of assisted concerns;

“(v) to the maximum extent practicable, increases or decreases in profits of assisted concerns; and

“(vi) the most recent analysis, as required under subsection (g)(1)(B), and the subsequent determination made by the Administration under that subsection.

“(2) **STUDY AND REPORT ON REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN.**—

“(A) **STUDY.**—The Administrator shall periodically conduct a study to identify industries, as defined under the North American Industry Classification System, underrepresented by small business concerns owned and controlled by women.

“(B) **REPORT.**—Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment of this subsection, and every 5 years thereafter, the Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate and the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives a report on the results of each study under paragraph (1) conducted during the 5-year period ending on the date of the report.

“(1) **OFFICE OF WOMEN’S BUSINESS OWNERSHIP.**—

“(1) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—There is established within the Administration an Office of Women’s Business Ownership, which shall be responsible for the administration of the Administration’s programs for the development of women’s business enterprises (as defined in section 408 of the Women’s Business Ownership Act of 1988 (15 U.S.C. 7108)). The Office of Women’s Business Ownership shall be administered by an Assistant Administrator, who shall be appointed by the Administrator.

“(2) **ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE OFFICE OF WOMEN’S BUSINESS OWNERSHIP.**—

“(A) **QUALIFICATION.**—The position of Assistant Administrator shall be a Senior Executive Service position under section 3132(a)(2) of title 5, United States Code. The Assistant Administrator shall serve as a noncareer appointee (as defined in section 3132(a)(7) of that title).

“(B) **DUTIES.**—The Assistant Administrator shall administer the programs and services of the Office of Women’s Business Ownership and perform the following functions:

“(i) Recommend the annual administrative and program budgets of the Office and eligible entities receiving a grant under the Women’s Business Center Program.

“(ii) Review the annual budgets submitted by each eligible entity receiving a grant under the Women’s Business Center Program.

“(iii) Collaborate with other Federal departments and agencies, State and local governments, not-for-profit organizations, and for-profit organizations to maximize utilization of taxpayer dollars and reduce (or eliminate) any duplication among the programs overseen by the Office of Women’s Business Ownership and those of other entities that provide similar services to women entrepreneurs.

“(iv) Maintain a clearinghouse to provide for the dissemination and exchange of information between women’s business centers.

“(v) Serve as the vice chairperson of the Interagency Committee on Women’s Business Enterprise and as the liaison for the National Women’s Business Council.

“(3) **MISSION.**—The mission of the Office of Women’s Business Ownership shall be to assist women entrepreneurs to start, grow, and compete in global markets by providing quality support with access to capital, access to markets, job creation, growth, and counseling by—

“(A) fostering participation of women entrepreneurs in the economy by overseeing a network of women’s business centers throughout States and territories;

“(B) creating public-private partnerships to support women entrepreneurs and conduct outreach and education to small business concerns owned and controlled by women; and

“(C) working with other programs of the Administrator to—

“(i) ensure women are well-represented in those programs and being served by those programs; and

“(ii) identify gaps where participation by women in those programs could be increased.

“(4) **ACCREDITATION PROGRAM.**—

“(A) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—Not later than 270 days after the date of enactment of this paragraph, the Administrator shall publish standards for a program to accredit eligible entities that receive a grant under this section.

“(B) **PUBLIC COMMENT; TRANSITION.**—Before publishing the standards under subparagraph (A), the Administrator—

“(i) shall provide a period of not less than 60 days for public comment on such standards; and

“(ii) may not terminate a grant under this section absent evidence of fraud or other criminal misconduct by the recipient.

“(C) **CONTRACTING AUTHORITY.**—The Administrator may provide financial assistance, by contract or otherwise, to a relevant national women’s business center representative association to provide assistance in establishing the standards required under subparagraph (A) or for carrying out an accreditation program pursuant to such standards.

“(m) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Administration to carry out this section, to remain available until expended, \$21,750,000 for each of fiscal years 2019 through 2022.

“(2) **USE OF AMOUNTS.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided in subparagraph (B), amounts made available under this subsection for fiscal year 2018, and each fiscal year thereafter, may only be used for grant awards and may not be used for costs incurred by the Administration in connection with the management and administration of the program under this section.

“(B) **EXCEPTIONS.**—Of the amount made available under this subsection for a fiscal year, the following amounts shall be available:

“(i) For the first fiscal year beginning after the date of the enactment of this subparagraph, 2.65 percent.

“(ii) For the second fiscal year beginning after the date of the enactment of this subparagraph and each fiscal year thereafter through fiscal year 2022, 2.5 percent.

“(3) **EXPEDITED ACQUISITION.**—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Administrator may use such expedited acquisition methods as the Administrator determines to be appropriate to carry out this section, except that the Administrator shall ensure that all small business sources are provided a reasonable opportunity to submit proposals.”

SEC. 3. EFFECT ON EXISTING GRANTS.

(a) **TERMS AND CONDITIONS.**—A nonprofit organization receiving a grant under section 29(m) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656(m)), as in effect on the day before the date of enactment of this Act, shall continue to receive the grant under the terms and conditions in effect for the grant on the day before the date of enactment of this Act, except that the nonprofit organization may not apply for a continuation of the grant under section 29(m)(5) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656(m)(5)), as in effect on the day before the date of enactment of this Act.

(b) **LENGTH OF CONTINUATION GRANT.**—The Administrator of the Small Business Administration may award a grant under section 29(m) of the Small Business Act, as amended by this Act, to a nonprofit organization receiving a grant under section 29(m) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656(m)), as in effect on the day before the date of enactment of this Act, for the period—

(1) beginning on the day after the last day of the grant agreement under such section 29(m); and

(2) ending at the end of the third fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 4. REGULATIONS.

Not later than 270 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of Small Business Administration shall publish in the Federal Register such regulations as are necessary to carry out section 29 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656), as amended by this Act. The Administrator shall accept public comments on such proposed regulations for a period of not less than 60 days.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1680, the Women's Business Centers Improvements Act of 2018, which was introduced by the gentleman from California (Mr. KNIGHT), who is also the chairman of the Subcommittee on Contracting and Workforce and who has been a very active member of that committee for quite some time now.

This legislation makes key updates to the Small Business Administration's Office of Women's Business Ownership and the Women's Business Center, or WBC, program.

The WBC program provides grants to over 100 nonprofit organizations across the country to provide socially and economically disadvantaged women with technical and managerial training designed to meet the needs of women entrepreneurs. Many women's business centers offer training at night, or in multiple languages, to ensure that all women have the small business knowledge, tools, and support they need when creating or sustaining a business.

Last year, WBCs trained over 114,000 clients and advised over 26,000 individuals. This training and counseling contributed to the creation of more than 17,000 new small businesses in the United States. Clearly, the Women's Business Center program has a profound impact not only in our local communities, but also on our Nation's economy overall.

H.R. 1680 authorizes the WBC program, requiring specific conditions for participation and application criteria for organizations seeking a WBC grant.

While many of these requirements have been met in practice, the inclusion of these standards in statute allows for increased congressional oversight and program confidence.

H.R. 1680 also increases the WBC grant award to reflect inflation. This minor increase provides new and existing women's business centers with the support they need to provide an effective course curriculum to small business clients.

Additionally, H.R. 1680 requires the SBA to establish a WBC accreditation program. This program, similar to the successful small business development center accreditation program, will ensure pragmatic consistency among WBC locations and guarantee that each center is providing women entrepreneurs with effective training opportunities. These updates will ensure that the funds supporting the WBC program are used efficiently and to foster economic growth.

H.R. 1680 is an important step to ensuring that the more than 11.6 million women-owned small businesses continue to grow and that the next generation of women entrepreneurs have the opportunity to pursue business creation. For that reason, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1680.

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

□ 1415

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1680, the Women's Business Centers Improvements Act of 2018.

Small businesses are as diverse as our Nation, and the SBA entrepreneurial development initiatives are no different.

Women's business centers, or WBCs, are a critical initiative for female entrepreneurs. WBCs provide in-depth counseling, training, and mentoring to small firms, resulting in substantial economic impact.

Women businessowners have used this program to develop business plans, obtain financing, and expand their operations. As more women turn to entrepreneurship as a career path, it is critical this initiative remain in place to close these gaps.

Women are the fastest growing sector of entrepreneurs, and as more women establish home-based businesses, downsized from corporate executive positions, these centers are crucial in addressing the whole range of women's entrepreneurial needs.

The Women's Business Centers Improvements Act builds upon their success by creating uniformity through accreditation for WBCs and increasing maximum grant levels to ensure they have the resources to meet the growing demand for their services.

We all agree that women businessowners offer invaluable contributions to our economy, so we must step up to help them, and this legislation achieves that.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, before I turn it over to the gentleman, the principal sponsor of the bill, I want to thank our colleague Mr. LAWSON for his work on this bill as well. Again, we have been bipartisan, Republican and Democrat, working together to advance, in this case, women entrepreneurs all across the country.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. KNIGHT), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Contracting and Workforce.

Mr. KNIGHT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for his leadership. I thank Mr. LAWSON and Ranking Member VELÁZQUEZ for their leadership in this very, very important measure.

Mr. Speaker, I do rise today in support of the Women's Business Centers Improvements Act of 2018.

I introduced H.R. 1680 so that the outstanding growth our country has seen within women's entrepreneurship within the last decade can continue.

Over the last 10 years, the number of women-owned small businesses has increased by 114 percent. With women-owned firms growing more than two and a half times faster than the average business, we must recognize women entrepreneurs as a driving force in the U.S. economy.

The legislation modernizes both the Small Business Administration's Office of Women's Business Ownership and the SBA's Women's Business Centers program.

The Office of Women's Business Ownership administers the grant program that funds women's business centers. H.R. 1680 would require consistent standards and application requirements for grant recipients, ensuring that those centers have the ability to provide women with small business counseling and training.

The bill also institutes commonsense oversight requirements, standards for continued funding, and conditions of participation. This will increase congressional accountability and responsibility.

H.R. 1680 will allow millions of women throughout the country continued access to reliable and effective small business resources.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1680.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LAWSON), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Health and Technology.

Mr. LAWSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1680, the Women's Business Centers Improvements Act. This is a critically important piece of legislation that supports our Nation's women-owned small businesses.

Women's Business Centers support women-owned businesses through counseling and technical assistance. This

network of educational centers is the nexus for women who are either looking to start a business or looking to grow their business to the next level.

This bill clarifies the work of the Office of Women's Business Ownership within the SBA to help women entrepreneurs compete in a global market.

Specifically, there are more than 11.6 million small businesses owned by women, who employ nearly 9 million people. Further, there are roughly 5.4 million businesses owned by women of color, employing over 2.1 million people.

I am proud to work with my colleague, Mr. STEPHEN KNIGHT, on a bipartisan bill to increase the level of support for women businessowners so that we can guarantee that women entrepreneurs have the on-the-ground resources for them to strive.

I might point out that in the committee we learned that women-owned businesses are the fastest growing businesses in America.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this nonpartisan bill, H.R. 1680.

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

Mr. Speaker, the United States has over 9 million women-owned firms, over one-third of all firms. Our economy relies heavily on women-owned small businesses, as they generate over \$1 trillion in revenues and employ over 8 million workers. H.R. 1680 ensures that they have access to the tools they need to succeed.

Because nearly half of aspiring women businessowners report a lack of available mentors, we must take action to break down the barriers hindering their success. That is why it is imperative for us to pass this legislation today, ensuring access to mentorship and professional guidance to the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs.

Today's measure is endorsed by the Association of Women's Business Centers, along with other organizations.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, almost 40 percent of all firms in the United States are women-owned, and over the last 10 years that number has more than doubled.

It is important to recognize women entrepreneurs as a driving force in the American economy. This legislation, I think, goes a long way in recognizing that and actually improving it over the upcoming years.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan 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 Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1680, 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.

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2018

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1702) to amend the Small Business Act to improve the small business development centers program, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1702

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This subtitle may be cited as the "Small Business Development Centers Improvement Act of 2018".

SEC. 2. USE OF AUTHORIZED ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS.

The Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 631 et seq.) is amended—

(1) by redesignating section 47 as section 48; and

(2) by inserting after section 46 the following new section:

"SEC. 47. USE OF AUTHORIZED ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS.

"(a) EXPANDED SUPPORT FOR ENTREPRENEURS.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Administrator shall only deliver entrepreneurial development services, entrepreneurial education, support for the development and maintenance of clusters, or business training through a program authorized under—

"(A) section 7(j), 7(m), 8(a), 8(b)(1), 21, 22, 29, or 32 of this Act; or

"(B) sections 358 or 389 of the Small Business Investment Act of 1958.

"(2) EXCEPTION.—This section shall not apply to services provided to assist small business concerns owned by an Indian tribe (as such term is defined in section 8(a)(13)).

"(b) ANNUAL REPORT.—Beginning on the first December 1 after the date of the enactment of this subsection, the Administrator shall annually report to the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate on all entrepreneurial development activities undertaken in the current fiscal year through a program described in subsection (a). Such report shall include—

"(1) a description and operating details for each program and activity;

"(2) operating circulars, manuals, and standard operating procedures for each program and activity;

"(3) a description of the process used to award grants under each program and activity;

"(4) a list of all awardees, contractors, and vendors (including organization name and location) and the amount of awards for the current fiscal year for each program and activity;

"(5) the amount of funding obligated for the current fiscal year for each program and activity; and

"(6) the names and titles for those individuals responsible for each program and activity."

SEC. 3. MARKETING OF SERVICES.

Section 21 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(o) NO PROHIBITION OF MARKETING OF SERVICES.—The Administrator shall not prohibit applicants receiving grants under this section from marketing and advertising their services to individuals and small business concerns."

SEC. 4. DATA COLLECTION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 21(a)(3)(A) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648(a)(3)(A)) is amended—

(1) by striking "as provided in this section and" and inserting "as provided in this section"; and

(2) by inserting before the period at the end the following: ", and (iv) governing data collection activities related to applicants receiving grants under this section".

(b) ANNUAL REPORT ON DATA COLLECTION.—Section 21 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648), as amended by section 3 of this Act, is further amended by adding at the end the following:

"(p) ANNUAL REPORT ON DATA COLLECTION.—The Administrator shall report annually to the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate on any data collection activities related to the Small Business Development Center Program."

(c) WORKING GROUP TO IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT AND STUDY.—The Administrator of the Small Business Administration shall establish a group to be known as the "Data Collection Working Group" consisting of members from entrepreneurial development grant recipients associations and organizations and officials from the Small Business Administration, to carry out a study to determine the best way to capture data collection and create or revise existing systems dedicated to data collection.

(2) REPORT.—Not later than the end of the 180-day period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the Data Collection Working Group shall issue a report to the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate containing the findings and determinations made in carrying out the study required under paragraph (1), including—

(A) recommendations for revising existing data collection practices; and

(B) a proposed plan for the Small Business Administration to implement such recommendations.

SEC. 5. FEES FROM PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AND COSPONSORSHIPS.

Section 21(a)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648(a)(3)(C)), as amended by section 4, is further amended by adding at the end the following:

"(D) FEES FROM PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AND COSPONSORSHIPS.—A small business development center that participates in a private partnership or cosponsorship with the Administration shall not be prohibited from collecting fees or other income related to the operation of such a private partnership or cosponsorship."

SEC. 6. EQUITY FOR SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS.

Subclause (I) of section 21(a)(4)(C)(v) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648(a)(4)(C)(v)) is amended to read as follows:

"(I) IN GENERAL.—Of the amounts made available in any fiscal year to carry out this section, not more than \$600,000 may be used by the Administration to pay expenses enumerated in subparagraphs (B) through (D) of section 20(a)(1)."

SEC. 7. CONFIDENTIALITY REQUIREMENTS.

Section 21(a)(7)(A) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648(a)(7)(A)) is amended by inserting after "under this section" the following: "to any State, local, or Federal agency, or to any third party".