

behalf of women's economic empowerment. The programs of the Chicago-based center are effective, successful, and benefit diverse women. These centers service an array of women and their families, including self-employment for former welfare recipients, business development, expansion and job creation.

The work of the Women's Business Development Center and other women's business assistance centers are essential to strengthening the economy of this Nation by fostering women's business development nationally.

The WBDC and women's business assistance centers are funded by the United States SBA office of Women's Business Ownership and by private and public sector support. They help support a diverse and growing population of new and emerging job-creating women entrepreneurs, including women transitioning off welfare.

These centers are unique in that they provide long-term training, involve public and private partnerships for their support, and can be measured on the basis of their economic impact. These centers have served tens of thousands of women.

The women's business assistance centers serve our constituencies by offering quality programs to effectively leverage scarce public and private resources into successful job creation, new business start-ups, and business expansion. Most of them, even after they are no longer eligible for Federal funding, continue to be sustained by the private sector.

These centers are committed to economic self-sufficiency programs that are as diverse as the women served: women of color, women on public assistance, women seeking self-employment, rural and urban women, and women starting home-based businesses. Therefore, it is appropriate that we pause to recognize the great work of the Women's Business Development Center and women's business assistance centers throughout the country.

I take special note of the work of Hedy Ratner of the Women's Development Center, Counselo Pope of the Cosmopolitan Chamber of Commerce, Jaribi Kitwana, director of the Women's Business Development Center, and Pam Bozeman, director of the Women's Self-Employment Project, all outstanding women in the City of Chicago who provide immeasurable help and support to other women seeking to go into business.

RECOGNIZING ACHIEVEMENTS OF WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to welcome the United States and the Congress to Women's History Month. As a member of the Women's Caucus, I stand to rec-

ognize the achievements and the remaining obstacles of women-owned businesses.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the co-chairs of the Women's Caucus and the women-owned business legislative team, my colleagues, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. JUANITA MILLENDER-MCDONALD) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. SUE KELLY), for organizing us to come to the floor today. They should be congratulated for their efforts on this issue, specifically for introducing legislation, House Resolution 313, which outlines the findings from last year's first-ever Women's Caucus hearing on women-owned businesses.

This legislation expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that all Federal agencies would benefit from reviewing specified recommendations for the purpose of improving equitable access for women-owned businesses to the Federal procurement market.

Women-owned businesses are important sources of economic development in my community in Miami, Florida, one of the poorest districts in the country. But low income does not mean low ambition, Mr. Speaker, nor does it mean low potential. Microcredit programs that lend small amounts to non-traditional borrowers have proven to be very promising tools for change, allowing women to build businesses, income and pride for themselves and their families.

Small loans, yes; microcredit, yes; but it does bring respect and ownership to these women who otherwise could not find work. This in itself is another remedy for getting off welfare and moving into work.

The microcredit concept has been notably developed by Working Capital Florida. That is the name of the group. It is a local nonprofit group in south Florida. This program serves approximately 350 businesses in Miami, Dade County. The loans average about \$725, and they have to be paid back in less than a year. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? These loans have been coming back in and being paid and being rotated and other women are taking advantage of this money.

Many of the borrowers of the money comprise single-family mothers with not a man in the House. These are minority mothers who have children they must care for, and certainly Working Capital Florida is helping them.

Programs like Working Capital Florida provide women with the opportunity to develop their entrepreneurial talents. Working Capital Florida provides the loans necessary to launch businesses, and also provides education about business practices through workshops and training sessions, allowing women to further tune their skills for successful enterprises.

In the wake of welfare reform, this is a particularly critical time for business enterprise, and specifically business enterprise for women. There are

few jobs for female welfare recipients in inner-city areas. In Miami many women have taken the giant step of employing themselves to make ends meet for their families.

In Liberty City, my own neighborhood in Miami, many women create their own private businesses. Many of them make dolls. They sell them. They make head scarves. They make ethnic clothing. They capitalize on their own personal talents in order to make ends meet. Innovative businesses run the gamut from day care and house cleaning to hair braiding and stick-on nail specialists.

These women simply could not launch these businesses without the required financial backing to bring their initiatives to fruition. Programs like Working Capital Florida enable these women to devise their own business plans and get on their feet. These are small loans, Mr. Speaker, between \$500 and \$5,000, and they maintain the ability to produce significant life changes. They generate economic activity in our communities and a sense of self-pride.

I believe that the community development opportunity that is provided through group lending programs is vitally important, especially during a time that long-time safety nets for the poor are unraveling. Further support from other private sources, commercial banks, and State and Federal governments, helps to further build programs like Working Capital Florida.

Mr. Speaker, thousands of poor women are responsive, creative and hard-working. They have to spark. All they need is a little leadership to turn that spark into a flame. And that is what Working Capital Florida is doing and that is what many programs throughout this country are doing to help women get on their feet. They have the skills. They have the ability.

U.S. OBSESSION WITH WORLDWIDE MILITARY OCCUPATION POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, last week it was Saddam Hussein and the Iraqis. This week's Hitler is Slobodon Milosevic and the Serbs. Next week, who knows? Kim Chong-il and the North Koreans? Next year, who will it be, the Ayatollah and the Iranians? Every week we must find a foreign infidel to slay; and, of course, keep the military-industrial complex humming.

Once our ally, Saddam Hussein, with encouragement from us, invaded Iran. Was it not logical that he might believe that we condone border crossings and invasions even into what Iraqis believe rightfully theirs, Kuwait, especially after getting tacit approval from U.S. Ambassador Glaspie?

Last week U.S. Special Envoy to the Balkans Robert Gelbard, while visiting Belgrade, praised Milosevic for his cooperation in Bosnia and called the separatists in Kosova "without question a