

by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 28, 2004

PN1254 Marine Corps nominations (263) beginning Mark A. Adams, and ending Erin L. Zellers, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 22, 2004

PN1256 Marine Corps nominations (560) beginning Christopher J. Aaby, and ending Mark W. Zipsie, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 22, 2004

PN1537 Marine Corps nomination of David C. Cox, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of April 19, 2004

PN1491 Marine Corps nominations (47) beginning Travis R. Avent, and ending Mark B. Windham, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of April 6, 2004

NAVY

PN1493 Navy nominations (2083) beginning Victoria T. Crescenzi, and ending Joseph Zuliani, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of April 6, 2004

PN1538 Navy nomination of Scott F. Murray, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of April 19, 2004

PN1492 Navy nomination of Melissa A. Harvison, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of April 6, 2004

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now return to legislative session.

WOMEN'S SUSTAINABILITY RECOVERY ACT OF 2004

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Small Business Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 2267 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2267) to amend section 29(k) of the Small Business Act to establish funding priorities for women's business centers.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise to support S. 2267, the "Women's Sustainability Recovery Act of 2004" which I recently introduced. There is today a critical need to preserve the operations of existing the Women's Business Centers currently serving women entrepreneurs in almost every State and territory. I am pleased to be joined in this effort by Senators DOMENICI, CHAFEE, BOND and others. Buy adopting this bill today, the Senate is signaling its intention to preserve much-needed funding for the business centers currently in operation.

Today, more than 10.6 million women-owned small businesses are helping to fuel our economic recovery: they employ over 19 million Americans and contribute \$2.46 trillion in revenues. In my home State of Maine, there

are more than 63,000 women-owned firms, generating more than \$9 billion in sales. Numbers like these speak for themselves, clear evidence of the success of the Women's Business Centers Program, which helps women achieve their dreams of owning a small business, and other programs like it. As chair of the Small Business Committee, I am committed to a wide range of efforts designed to assist women business owners, so that they, in turn, can continue to make a significant contribution to our economy.

The Women's Business Center program was introduced through the Women's Business Ownership Act of 1988, and it was made permanent in 1997. Congress has demonstrated its support for this program time and time again; its appropriations have grown from \$2 million in 1989 to \$12.5 million in 2004, and the results of this investment have been impressive. In fiscal year 2002, centers reported clients realized a return of \$161 in gross receipts for every dollar invested in the program.

Even more remarkable is the fact that the SBA's Women's Business Center have helped to create or retain almost 7,000 jobs in the United States, a success attributable to the centers unique training and counseling programs. In fiscal year 2003, the Women's Business Center program increased its expected level of delivered services by 17 percent, providing counseling and assistance to more than 106,600 clients and thereby exceeding its initial goal of 88,540 clients. To a large degree, this increased productivity has been triggered by the success of sustainability grants, which extend funding to eligible women's business centers.

This year, insufficient funding for the sustainability grant program may force 53 Women's Business Centers to close their doors. While current legislation reserves 30.2 percent of the Women's Business Center appropriation for the sustainability grant program, this amount is not enough to support the 53 centers in jeopardy. By supporting this bill, S. 2267, which increases the reserve forth sustainability grant program by 48 percent, Congress will ensure that each of the 53 Women's Business Centers eligible for sustainability has the opportunity to compete for a sufficient pool of funding for fiscal year 2004, and that centers will be able to effectively provide valuable technical assistance to women entrepreneurs.

Without this legislation, many of the center may be in jeopardy of closing their doors. This would be a significant loss given that some of these centers have been part of the program for as long as 9 years and, during that time, have proven themselves powerful engines of economic development in communities and States across the Nation.

These centers have been extraordinarily successful in providing assistance to women in all walks of life. Women who once received public assistance are now operating businesses

and creating jobs. Other women are transitioning from employee to small business employer, and established business owners are creating and manufacturing products for sale at home and abroad. The centers nurture women entrepreneurs through business and financial planning and assist women business owners who need help securing funding for startup and expansion. Furthermore, this legislation requires no additional appropriation, just a reallocation of current funds.

I am committed to resolving the women's sustainability funding crisis through this bill, and I will continue to work with my colleagues to ensure the continued success of women-owned businesses.

(At the request of Mr. DASCHLE, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

• Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today I join my colleague, Senator SNOWE, chair of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, in passing legislation to safeguard Women's Business Centers funded through the Small Business Administration. This legislation is identical to the Women's Business Center provision I introduced as part of S. 2186, the SBA Emergency Authorization Extension Act of 2004, on March 9, 2004, and it fixes a funding gap that exists for meritorious Women's Business Centers that are graduating from the first stage of the program and entering the sustainability portion.

I would first like to thank Chair SNOWE for working very closely with me on this issue, as we have for the past year and a half. Senator SNOWE has long been an advocate of the Women's Business Centers and was a co-sponsor of the original legislation that created the sustainability pilot program in 1999. Now, her support for continuing the nationwide network of Women's Business Centers has been the catalyst for success in the Senate. I commend Chair SNOWE for her strong leadership for women in business across this country. I would also like to thank all of the cosponsors of this legislation and of S. 2266, all of whom have shown resounding support for women entrepreneurs and recognize the positive impact the Women's Business Centers have on promoting and supporting women in business and on strengthening our national economy.

Second, I want to comment on the Bush administration's proposals to eliminate experienced, efficient, and effective Women's Business Centers in favor of new and untested centers. Unless this legislation can be enacted quickly, the administration will move forward with its proposal, which places in jeopardy experienced Women's Business Centers in 39 States and eliminates assistance for thousands of women in business. While, as this bill demonstrates, I support opening new centers to help women entrepreneurs who do not currently have access to this important assistance, this should