



OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20416

November 6, 2014

The Honorable Carl Levin  
Chairman  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I write to you to encourage the inclusion of an important provision in the final version of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015.

As you know, women-owned businesses are growing at an unprecedented rate. More than 1 in 4 U.S. companies is owned or led by a woman, and these firms employ more than 7.8 million Americans. While those statistics are an indication of progress, women still do not have equal access to economic opportunities in this country. Women remain underrepresented in the C-suite, have trouble accessing capital, and face barriers in winning public and private contracts.

Nationally, women entrepreneurs still receive less than 5 percent of federal contracts. At the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), we are continuously looking for ways to open doors for more women entrepreneurs in the Federal and commercial contract space. Among our many efforts includes aggressively promoting the Women-Owned Small Business Contract Program, which aims at expanding federal contracting opportunities for women-owned small businesses. We thank you for your steadfast support of those efforts during your 35 years in the Senate, both as a longtime member of the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship and as the Chairman of the Committee on Armed Services.

An important piece of providing opportunity for women small business owners is sole-source authority for the Federal women's contracting program. Providing this authority for contracts up to a certain dollar value would create parity with the other small business socio-economic contracting programs. In early June of this year, I called on Congress to give Federal agencies this tool to level the playing field for women-owned businesses. I would ask for your help, as the leader of the Senate Armed Services Committee, in including a sole-source provision in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2015.

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I appreciate your support of SBA and the small business community. Your tremendous leadership in the United State Senate on many important issues will be greatly missed. If you and your staff have any further questions, please contact the SBA Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs at (202) 205-6700. A similar letter is being sent to Senator Inhofe.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Maria Contreras-Sweet". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "M" and a stylized "C" for Contreras.

Maria Contreras-Sweet