



News Release

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National Women's Business Council Holds Town Hall Meeting for Women Entrepreneurs in Portland

Input from women business owners to inform future policies

Portland, OR – The National Women's Business Council (NWBC) held a town hall meeting for women business owners in Portland, Oregon today. This free event was designed to promote dialogue among the Portland-Vancouver women's business community and to further the Council's mission of connecting the women's business community to policymakers. Breakout sessions focused on specific policy areas, such as affordable health care, access to capital, procurement, and taxes, and allowed participants to discuss the challenges and priorities they face running their businesses.

The Council held a similar event in St. Louis, Missouri in March. Recommendations gathered during both events will be compiled later this year in a report that will contribute to the Council's policy recommendations to the President, Congress, and the Small Business Administration.

Kathryn Eshelman, President and Co-Founder of Columbus, OH-based Grade A Notes, Charter Member of the Women Presidents' Organization, and a NWBC member, moderated the program, which included welcome remarks from Lydia Muniz, the Oregon Governor's Advocate for Minority, Women and Emerging Small Businesses. Connie Marshall, Regional Advocate for the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy also shared research on the status of women's business ownership in Portland, Oregon, and the United States. Later in the day, Council members Susan Au Allen, U.S. Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce, and Beverly Inman-Ebel, National Association of Women Business Owners, as well as Pat Granum of Portland-area Co-Operations, Inc. served as panelists during an open discussion with town hall participants.

"The National Women's Business Council is the federal government's only independent voice for women business owners," said Council member and town hall moderator Kathy Eshelman. "This event allowed the Council to hear from a diverse population of women business owners who may not be involved regularly in the public policy process. The Council will bring the results of today's discussions directly to policymakers to ensure that the voices of women business owners are being heard in our nation's capital."

Several partner organizations contributed to the event's planning, including the ONABEN Native American Business Network and Women's Business Center, the Portland District Office and Region X Office of the Small Business Administration, the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs, Oregon Entrepreneurs Network, Souk llc, Portland Female Executives, and Women Entrepreneurs of Oregon. "We were delighted with the outcome of this town hall meeting," said NWBC Executive Director Margaret Barton. "The Portland women's business community contributed significantly to the discussion surrounding public policies affecting women-owned businesses. Their comments will have a direct impact on women entrepreneurs throughout the country."

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The National Women's Business Council is a bi-partisan Federal government council created to serve as an independent source of advice and counsel to the President, Congress, and the U.S. Small Business Administration on economic issues of importance to women business owners. Members of the Council are prominent women business owners and leaders of women's business organizations. For more information about the Council, its mission and activities, contact: National Women's Business Council, 409 3rd Street, SW, Suite 210, Washington, DC 20024; phone: 202-205-3850; fax: 202-205-6825, e-mail: info@nwbc.gov; Web site: www.nwbc.gov.