

This summer I intend to work closely with Senator KERRY on legislation to allow Women's Business Centers that have completed their initial three or five year Women's Business Center grants with SBA to apply for another five year grant to allow them to be able to continue to provide the high level of service they are currently delivering to women small business owners. Our initiative may require an increase in SBA's budget for the Women's Business Center Program for FY 2000, and I intend to study very closely the financial needs of the program. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I will urge my colleagues to support an increase in the FY 2000 budget for the program, if necessary, that will allow it to expand and meet the needs of the growing number of women-owned small businesses. I strongly believe we must pursue this course even if that means pushing for an increase above the amount requested in the President's budget request.

Mr. President, it is critical that the Senate vote to approve the "women's Business Center Act of 1999," so that the Federal government can continue to help make small business ownership a reality for women entrepreneurs. I urge my colleagues to support this important bill.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today the Senate will vote on H.R. 774, the Women's Business Center Amendments Act of 1999. This bill will make small but important changes to the Women's Business Center program. First, similar to the bill that Senator CLELAND and I introduced last Congress, it will raise the authorization for the centers from \$8 million to \$11 million. Secondly, the bill changes the matching requirements for centers; instead of raising two non-Federal dollars for every Federal dollar in the third, fourth and fifth years, centers will only be required to raise one non-Federal dollar for every one Federal dollar. I support this bill, thought I would prefer that the authorization and funding were increased to \$12 million to make it consistent with the legislation our Committee passed last year. This program has been very successful in helping women start and grow businesses and it deserves generous funding.

Women-owned businesses are increasing in number, range, diversity and earning power. They constitute more than one-third of the 20 million small businesses in the United States, and account for some \$3 trillion in annual revenues to the economy. Addressing the special needs of women-owned businesses serves not only entrepreneurs, but also the economic strength of this nation as a whole.

This bill further ensures that new and potential women business owners, who otherwise might be excluded from the economic mainstream of society,

are afforded every opportunity to succeed through the Small Business Administration's Women's Business Centers program.

Centers are faced with the challenging task of teaching business basics and providing practical support and realistic encouragement. Massachusetts has an excellent example of a Women's Business Center—the Center for Women & Enterprise (CWE) in Boston. Andrea Silbert is a tireless executive director who effectively raises money, forges partnerships and designs thorough training and mentoring programs to help women entrepreneurs. When CWE trains an entrepreneur, she learns how to approach a lender for a loan, learns how to manage her business, and gains an understanding of the hows and whys of marketing. Nationwide, women should have access to this type of quality, comprehensive training.

It is clear that the centers are having a positive social and economic impact on the lives of many women and the communities which they serve. New clients continue to be racially and ethnically diverse: Some 40 percent are members of minority groups. About half are married, and half are single, widowed, divorced, or separated.

While this bill addresses some important issues, I am concerned about the unresolved problem of sustainability. How can established, effective centers that are at the end of the five-year Federal funding cycle continue to provide the same quality of services without the Federal contribution? It's their bread and butter, and it's indispensable leverage that helps centers raise the obligatory matching funding.

Agnes Noonan, executive director of the Women's Economic Self-Sufficiency Team (WESST corp.) in New Mexico recently reinforced this point when she testified before the Senate Committee on Small Business. With an 89 percent growth in the number of women-owned businesses over the last decade and a 161 percent increase in revenues, it is sound economic policy for the Federal government to support programs which facilitate the training and development of women business owners. It follows that we would be wise to safeguard the investment that has been made to date in the infrastructure of women's business centers around the country.

I believe we should find a fair way to let these centers recompile for the base funding. And we should do it this calendar year, before it's too late and the centers have lost their Federal funding and are out of business. I will be introducing a bill to allow Women's Business Centers to recompile for Federal funding in mid-April, when we return from the Easter recess. I hope that my colleagues with strong Women's Business Centers in their states will join me in sponsoring recompetition legislation.

Mr. President, I thank my colleagues for their continuing efforts to expand policies that allow women entrepreneurs to grow and thrive.

Mr. CRAPO. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time, and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed at the appropriate place in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 774) was considered read a third time and passed.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.J. RES. 26, H.J. RES. 27, H.J. RES 28

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed en bloc to the consideration of the following resolutions which are at the desk: H.J. Res. 26, H.J. Res. 27, and H.J. Res. 28. I further ask consent that the Senate proceed to their consideration en bloc, and I further ask consent that the joint resolutions be read the third time and passed, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, and the above occur en bloc.

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

REAPPOINTMENT OF BARBER B. CONABLE, JR. TO THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 26) providing for the reappointment of Barber B. Conable, Jr. as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution.

The joint resolution (H.J. Res. 26) was considered read the third time and passed.

REAPPOINTMENT OF DR. HANNA H. GRAY TO THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the next resolution.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 27) providing for the reappointment of Dr. Hanna H. Gray as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution.

The joint resolution (H.J. Res. 27) was considered read the third time and passed.

REAPPOINTMENT OF WESLEY S. WILLIAMS, JR. TO THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the next resolution.