

**WIPP Works in
Washington,
November 2008**

"What the Election Results Mean to Women Business Owners"

By Ann Sullivan, WIPP Government Relations

Washington will have a new look and feel in January, 2009 with the election of a Democratic President and a Democratic Congress with larger majorities both in the House and the Senate. The first and most obvious change is change in Cabinet Secretaries and political appointees in the federal agencies. Most, if not all Cabinet Secretaries will change and all those political appointees under the Secretaries change as well.

The agenda will change. Those in power make the rules and nothing is quite as evident as the change in the legislative and political agenda that will be put forth in the first quarter of 2009. The Obama agenda will look very different from the Bush agenda and with that comes new initiatives and different solutions to the nation's problems.

Because of the shift in elected officials, the leadership in the House and the Senate will look different. For example, Senator Joe Biden who will become the Vice President, was the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The Democrats must decide whether or not to keep Senator Lieberman as Chair of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee after his very public campaigning for the Republican ticket for the Presidency. Senator Kerry, Chairman of the Senate Small Business Committee has been rumored in the media to be a contender for Secretary of State under the Obama Administration. So, that means that three Chairmanships of Senate Committees could change in a very short period of time. The bigger shift in leadership is among Republicans. Although at this writing, a number of Senate seats have not yet been decided, Republican leadership roles in Senate Committees will undergo significant change. Those Committees affected are the Agriculture Committee, the Commerce Committee, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the Special Committee on Aging. In the House, the most senior Republican member of the House Small Business Committee, Steve Chabot lost his election bid and the Committee with jurisdiction over federal contracting in the House will have a new Republican leader with the retirement of Tom Davis and the defeat of Christopher Shays. With a change in leadership comes a change in the Committee's agenda and a change in how the Committee s will function.

Now the question is whether or not the change in elected officials and a new President will result in a change of attitude in Washington. Is it possible to return to the days of politicians working together to find common solutions? Can the current leadership in the House and the Senate change the way they work with the minority/majority party? Can politicians really work together to ensure small businesses will continue to be the economic engine of the economy? Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid is quoted as saying "but really, this is a mandate for change and for hope. It's a mandate to stop fighting over the things that divide us and start working on the things that united us." Speaker Pelosi said, "working together in a bipartisanship spirit, we will rebuild America..." And if you did not hear Senator McCain's concession speech which may have been the most gracious speech anyone in recent memory has given, he called for the country to unite and come together to solve our economic problems.

He gave a very strong signal that when he returns to Washington, he will go back to reaching across the aisle.

What does this mean for women business owners? It means that principles called for in WIPP's Economic Blueprint have a real chance of being reality. If Congress and the new President can truly work together, we may be able to get health care reform, a meaningful women's procurement program, access to capital, a comprehensive energy policy and access to the telecommunications technology we need to grow our businesses. That is if—and only if—there is a bipartisan will to work together to bring this country back from its economic woes to one of economic growth.

Even though the Democrats are in control of the House, Senate and the Executive branch, that does not mean that WIPP will work only with those in charge. The minority party plays an important role in moderating the wishes of the majority party. That is the brilliance of our democracy. Since women business owners are a very practical bunch, we expect to have disagreements over taxes and other economic policy changes that will affect our ability to grow. But we have always prided ourselves in being able to weigh both sides of the argument and work with everyone to achieve our economic goals.

So, it is with hope that we turn the corner from partisan to bipartisan. It is with anticipation that we see Washington function like it should. It is our challenge to work with the new people that will run our government. WIPP accepts.

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