



**Business and
Professional
Women/USA**

*Remarks for Nancy L. Hurlbert
BPW/USA President
US Women's Chamber of Commerce Press Conference
December 2, 2004, 1:30pm
The National Press Club*

Good afternoon. My name is Nancy Hurlbert and I am the President of Business and Professional Women/USA (BPW/USA). BPW/USA was founded in 1919 to achieve equity for all women in the workplace and today we have tens of thousands of members in 1,500 Local Organizations around the country. BPW/USA became an Association member of the Women's Chamber in October. As the leading advocate for workingwomen, and one of the oldest and most prominent women's organizations in the country, BPW/USA is proud to have joined forces with the Women's Chamber to level the playing field for women in business.

We joined the US Women's Chamber of Commerce because we felt our voice was not being heard either at the US Chamber of Commerce or in the various community Chambers. I flew in today from South Florida, where individual women's chambers have been established - separate from the existing business chambers – because we found the existing chambers were

not addressing issues of concern to women...workplace flexibility, equal pay, overtime pay and paid time off.

I am here this afternoon to lend BPW/USA's support to the U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce and its complaint against the Small Business Administration and Administrator Hector Baretto. It is inexcusable that the SBA - a federal body charged with assisting and protecting the interests of small business - has failed to comply with legislation signed more than three years ago that required the SBA to conduct a study to identify underrepresented women-owned small businesses with respect to Federal procurement contracting.

For years BPW/USA has worked to strengthen programs and policies that would increase competitive contracting opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses. The failure of the Small Business Administration to implement this Congressionally-mandated study *and include funding* for the Women's Procurement Program in its budget, conflicts with BPW/USA's mission to achieve equity for women in business and circumvents Congress' clear mandate to support women business owners.

The SBA's actions demonstrate a significant lack of commitment to the tens of millions of women business owners in this country. BPW/USA's membership includes thousands of small business owners who could benefit from contracting opportunities with the federal government.

Without access to these opportunities, BPW members and other women, lose a valuable potential revenue stream and the federal government becomes yet another boy's club bearing a large sign stating,

"No Girls Allowed". Women business owners trust that the SBA is working to assist them - and when we learn that the SBA is not - action must be taken. It is for these reasons that BPW/USA supports the Women's Chamber in its lawsuit against the SBA and Administrator Barreto.

I guess we should not find it surprising that the SBA is in lock-step with the current Administration's anti-equal opportunity process. After all, last year when the University of Michigan brought its race-based affirmative action program to the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold, this Administration preemptively and voluntarily, filed an amicus brief opposing the University's position. Obviously, this Administration, including the SBA, is not supportive of affirmative action and equal opportunity for ALL its citizens.

BPW/USA has long focused on pay equity and the continuing wage gap. From the Boeing Company, who will pay between \$40.6 and \$72.5 million to settle a class-action lawsuit brought by women alleging discrimination, including how Boeing evaluates workers for pay raises and promotions; to Wall Street where Morgan Stanley has agreed to pay \$12 million to a saleswoman who contended that she was denied a promotion because of her sex; to the Coca Cola Co. who agreed to pay \$8.1 million to 2,000 female workers for failing to compensate them equally with male employees; women continue to be economically short-changed! How can we expect the private sector to “do the right thing” when the public sector does not lead? The SBA should be leading the way...should be showing the private sector how to increase business opportunities with women-owned businesses. By affording women equal opportunities and equal access, the SBA can have a positive impact on the economy. Women-owned businesses are often run more prudently, have lower overhead, and thusly, may be able to bid lower on contracts. This not only benefits them, but goes to the bottom-line on the government contract as well. This is a win-win for both women-owned businesses as well as the SBA. When women win government contracts...when women get equal pay...when women have a seat at the table, their family incomes rise and the whole family

benefits. This is not a “woman’s issue”, but a family issue...or in today’s vernacular, a moral issue.

BPW/USA looks forward to working with the U.S. Women’s Chamber to increase opportunities for women entrepreneurs and business owners both through lobbying for fair and equitable laws and regulations, and education. Although our partnership was only forged six weeks ago, BPW/USA members have already benefited from membership in the U.S. Women’s Chamber of Commerce as they work to grow and strengthen their businesses.