

HEIDI HEITKAMP

UNITED STATES SENATOR for NORTH DAKOTA

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Heitkamp, Duckworth Introduce Bill to Support Women Entrepreneurs

Number of Women-Owned Businesses has Increased by 45 Percent from 2007 to 2016; Bill Would Help Support & Encourage More Women-Owned Small Businesses

In April, Senators Urged President to Reestablish Federal Agency to Support Growth of Women-Owned Businesses

****Click Here for [Video](#) & [Audio](#)****

MINOT, N.D – U.S. Senator Heidi Heitkamp and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth, both members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship, introduced legislation to reauthorize the Interagency Committee on Women's Business Enterprise to better coordinate federal resources to help grow women-owned businesses.

There are currently an estimated 11.6 million women-owned businesses operating in the United States, and the number of women-owned businesses grew by [45 percent between 2007 and 2016](#). Building on this growth, Heitkamp and Duckworth's bill would revive a federal agency that has a proven history of boosting women-owned businesses. As a result, their bill could help support and encourage more women-owned businesses.

North Dakota continues to rank as one of the top states for women starting and growing their business according to the [2017 State of Women-Owned Businesses Report](#). North Dakota now has over 20,000 women-owned businesses and [ranks number one in terms of employment vitality](#) which is the employment growth rate of women-owned businesses and the average number of employees working at women-owned businesses. Further, North Dakota [ranks fourth](#) in the nation in terms of the number of new women-owned businesses as well as their growth in employment and revenues.

“Women across North Dakota have started innovative small businesses that help grow our economy, support new ideas, and create American jobs – and we need to encourage more women to take their ideas and make them into reality,” said **Heitkamp**. “Senator Duckworth and I are introducing this commonsense bill to get the Interagency Committee on Women’s Business Enterprise back up and running to support women in achieving their business goals – as the agency has historically done. North Dakota women are paving the way for others around the nation, proving that women-owned businesses are growing, leading, and resilient. Our goal is to make sure that trend only continues.”

“We should be doing everything we can to help women-owned businesses grow and create jobs in their communities,” said **Duckworth**. “I am proud to join Senator Heitkamp in introducing this legislation, which will help level the playing field for female entrepreneurs and business owners by making sure they have access to resources across Federal agencies while making sure the Federal Government shares and implements best practices when working with women-owned businesses so they can expand and further contribute to our economy.”

The Interagency Committee for Women’s Business Enterprise was established in 1979 and its work was critical to the efforts of several federal agencies and departments to develop policies to assist women business owners. The Interagency Committee was maintained through both Democratic and Republican administrations, but unfortunately it has been inactive since 2000 with no chairperson to operate it. The efforts to better coordinate federal resources are critical to make sure that women business owners and entrepreneurs receive the assistance they need to help start and grow their business enterprise. The National Women’s Business Council (NWBC) has led federal efforts to support women business owners and entrepreneurs, however the Council is not authorized to coordinate federal resources which is why reestablishing the Interagency Committee is needed.

Heitkamp and Duckworth’s bill would amend Title IV of the Women’s Business Ownership Act to reauthorize the Interagency Committee by making sure a Chairperson is at the helm to operate the Committee. Getting the Interagency Committee back to a functioning status would help increase the ability of the federal government to provide targeted assistance to women entrepreneurs as they seek to grow their businesses. It would also update the agencies and departments it would help coordinate to make sure all resources are being used effectively, and make sure the Interagency Committee works to carry out its mission to support and encourage women owned businesses.

In April, Heitkamp, Duckworth, and four other senators urged the president to reestablish the Interagency Committee for Women’s Business Enterprise. [Click here](#) to read their letter. Their bill builds on this continued effort to get the Interagency Committee back up and running.

Heitkamp has long worked to support small business growth across North Dakota, and has focused on boosting women small business owners. Below is a list of Heitkamp’s work:

- In April 2018, Heitkamp held a [roundtable discussion in Jamestown](#) with local women business leaders to discuss collaborative strategies to encourage support for women entrepreneurs in North Dakota.
- In April 2018, [Heitkamp sent a letter](#) to the president urging the reestablishment of the Interagency Committee for Women's Business Enterprise, [click here](#) to read the letter.
- In August 2017, [Heitkamp joined Kari Warberg Block](#) to host a women's small business roundtable in Bismarck to discuss policies that would support women entrepreneurs grow their businesses.
- In March 2017, Heitkamp reintroduced her bipartisan [Supporting America's Innovators Act](#) with U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) to help encourage investments in small businesses and startups in smaller communities.
- In May 2016, Heitkamp introduced her [Startup Entrepreneur Empowerment Delivery \(SEED\) Act](#). The SEED Act would expand access to early stage funding for startups in rural states and small cities – which many startups say is their biggest challenge.
- In February 2016, Heitkamp announced her support for family-friendly policies like the [FAMILY Act](#) that would give working families and entrepreneur's flexibility by creating a federal paid family and medical leave policy.
- In July 2015, Heitkamp brought [then-U.S. Small Business Administrator Maria Contreras-Sweet](#) to North Dakota in to meet with North Dakota successful women-owned small businesses, and to hold the first U.S. Senate Committee on Small Businesses [field hearing in Fargo](#) on how to better support startups in rural areas.
- In December 2014, Heitkamp recommended [Kari Warberg Block](#) for a position on the National Women's Business Council (NWBC) that she served on for three years.

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