Women Construction Owners & Executives, USA

WCOE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | November 2026

Women Rising Up
In Construction
Women Construction Owners & Executives, USA

Advocacy • Opportunity • Connection • Leadership • Community

Happy Soon Thanksgiving! • News for you to gobble up

THIS ISSUE AT A GLANCE

Nov 10 **WCOE California Top Golf**	Nov 18 **Free Cocktail Zoom**	March 14-1 **DC Leadership Summit**

THIS ISSUE AT A GLANCE

01 Upcoming event | **02 Legislative Update** | **03 Chapter News** | **04 Register Now**

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Presidents Message

Hello Members and Supporters of WCOE USA. I attended the Together We Build Fall Conference October 19-20 at the Coronado Island in San Diego, CA. Joy Dow of Northwestern Mutual kicked off the event by sponsoring a catamaran boat ride on the bay. It was gorgeous day and sparked such positivity for the conference. Hats off to Misha Homara and to Genevieve West who co-lead the California Chapter. They organized a great event, along with Heather Frisch of Seyfarth Shaw and a very dedicated committee consisting of Brenda Radmacher, Natane Rogers-Engle, Roanne Gatchalian, and Mike Gaite. I've attached the agenda link for your perusal: 2026 Conference Agenda — WCOE California. What a line-up of experts. Not one dull moment. Paul Pendergast of BuildIT was the emcee, bringing just the right amount of enthusiasm and timely execution of the agenda.

Happy to report that Lydia Miller of Miller Brothers (Warrenton, VA), who became a member after attending our DC Leadership Summit in March 2026, was a guest speaker and candidly spoke about her 120-year-old company transitioning to her 100% ownership just four years ago. And David Mullis and Trevor Kelly of GCP (https://govcontractpros.com/) (Washington, DC) were also guest speakers who carefully outlined the importance of advocacy and the new size standards and Federal Acquisition Changes that will impact small business.

Most notably, at the Fall Conference, we extended a lifetime achievement award to Rebecca Llewellyn. At 88 years old she sold her company, Payco Specialties, after 51 years in business. She overcame much misogyny and became a driving force in creating WCOE USA 41 years ago along with Deborah Wilder. Rebecaa travelled to DC to advocate for women construction owners. HR 50/50 was passed in 1988, allowing women to obtain a commercial loan without a male co-signor. (When Rebecca wanted to start her company, her $5,000 loan was denied by the bank.) For more information on her achievements please visit her article in California Construction News.

To view pictures of the conference please visit WCOE Fall Conf Pictures

Please take a gander at our new website, www.womenbuildamerica.com. One more tab is forthcoming – a member login – where members can search other members based on NAICS code and location. Sean Foster of Efocus Media worked diligently in transferring data and making us more relevant.

Our non-profit arm. WCOE Resource Center, also has a website, now, also thanks to Sean Foster. It was long overdue. It is our 501(c)3, established for education and training. Ida Brooker and Deborah Wilder manage the non-profit and Lynette Thompson, with their help, established our first every Young Ambassadorship program. For more information about the Resource Center, please visit https://www.wcoeresourcecenter.org/.

I am also happy to report that the WCOE USA board approved the hiring of an external CPA firm to do our monthly accounting, KPInsights. They offer keen guidance and a strong sense of urgency to help us budget better for our growth goals. But that is not all….We also hired a new Administrator/Marketing Manager, Elliette Reyna. Her Bio and greeting are below.



Meet Elliette Reyna
Administrator & Marketing Manager

Hello everyone!

My name is Elliette Reyna, and I'm excited to join WCOE as the new Administrator and Marketing Manager. I'm looking forward to getting to know the members, learning more about the organization, and contributing to its continued growth and success.

A little about me: I'm a United States Marine Corps veteran, and my time in the military played a significant role in shaping my discipline, work ethic, leadership skills, and ability to adapt to new challenges. Business and entrepreneurship have also been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. My mother is the owner of DH Home Improvement, a contracting company, so I've had a personal connection to the construction industry and an appreciation for the dedication it takes to build and grow a business.

Professionally, my experience spans marketing, sales, business development, and property management. I enjoy bringing creative ideas to life, building meaningful connections, developing strategies, and finding new ways to increase visibility and create opportunities for growth.

Outside of work, I enjoy reading, exploring creative projects, and spending time with my family. I'm someone who loves learning, taking on new challenges, and finding opportunities to grow both personally and professionally. I am also fluent in Spanish.

I'm excited for this new chapter with WCOE and the opportunity to work alongside such an accomplished group of women and industry professionals. I look forward to connecting with everyone and being part of all the great things ahead

Please note that our Legislative report will come later in November, after the election.

Please save the date for our next DC Leadership Summit at the Willard, March 14-16.

Sincerely,

Karen Barbour, National President

Member Spotlight – Jean Bjork



Jean is a force in the construction industry. She started her company in 1988 as a builder of custom homes that transitioned into a commercial carpentry contractor in 1999, becoming a fully Women-Owned company in 2006. Jean has been a member and strong advocate of WCOE for several decades. She and her company have amassed numerous awards from notable institutions for her diversity and inclusion.

READ FULL MEMBER SPOTLIGHT →

November has a few events with WCOE National, chapter, advocacy, federal contracting and networking opportunities. Events are listed in chronological order.

01 • UPCOMING EVENTS

Nov 3
Construction Angels
CREW Baltimore + WCOE DMV • Checkerspot Brewing • BINGO fundraiser.
REGISTER →

Nov 18
Cocktail Zoom
WCOE National virtual networking • 6:00 PM ET.
REGISTER →

Event flyers and expanded details appear in their related sections below.

02 • LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

SBA Extends Comment Period on Small Business Size Standards

WCOE submitted extensive comments on SBA's proposed Small Business Size Standards and revised methodology. WCOE raised concerns that proposed increases could reduce opportunities for genuinely small construction businesses and urged use of a Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) measure rather than simple headcount.

New deadline: November 20, 2026 • Document Nos. SBA-2026-0199 and SBA-2026-0265

READ MORE →

Surface Transportation Bill + DBE Program

USDOT's September 25 changes to DBE certification remove automatic presumptions based on race or sex and require individualized assessments. Existing DBEs face reevaluation, generally by December 24, 2026. WCOE is also tracking congressional DBE reauthorization and surface transportation legislation.

READ MORE →

Congress Heads into the Midterm Election

Congress is moving into its election-period recess ahead of the November 3 midterm elections. Temporary government funding and current surface transportation authorizations run through December 11, shifting several major decisions to the post-election session.

READ MORE: YEAR-END CONGRESIONAL OUTLOOK →

Election Outlook: November 3

The source draft highlights control of the House and Senate, several closely watched Senate contests, and the potential impact of the results on federal contracting and small-business policy in 2027.

READ MORE: ELECTION OUTLOOK →

03 • Chapter News

WCOE California

The California Chapter's next event is at Top Golf, November 10th 4-8 pm. For more information visit 2nd Topgolf events (NorCal & SoCal) — WCOE California

WCOE DMV

Doris Zografos, WCOE USA Board member located in Baltimore, Maryland and majority owner of Ease Painting and Construction, a Hubzone certified company, hosted an intimate event at her lovely home for Senator Alsobrooks on October 15th. The Senator was very engaging and concerned about the federal impacts to small businesses, woman and minority owned firms. She and her team were receptive in engaging with WCOE to further discuss our legislative agenda to find impactful ways to help women construction owners.



The DMV Chapter is happy to announce that our board is solidified along with our executive leadership. Our slate of officers for a two year term are:

Tamara McNulty, Esq of Lewis Brisbois – President & Finance Committee Member
Erica Jablonsky of Parkway Solutions – Vice President & Membership/Marketing Committee Chair
Angela Manley of DAed Industries – Treasurer & Chair of Finance Committee
Karen Barbour – The Barbour Group – Secretary & Legislative Committee Member

Board Member are as follows:

Kimberlee Driggs of D2 LLC – Legislative Chair
Amy Phillips of EFI Global – Sponsorship/Events Committee Chair
Dee Cutler – The Barbour Group – Sponsorship/Events Committee – Vice Chair
Carolyn Robbins – Marsh McLennan Agency – Sponsorship/Events Committee – Member
Terry Egley - Integrity Construction Group, Inc – Finance Committee – Member
Cari Adams Finch – Adams Environmental – Legislative Committee
Shana Carroll, PE – D.W. Kozera – Membership/Marketing Committee - Member
Melissa Martin – MC Builders LLC – Membership/Marketing Committee - Member

Thank you all for your leadership and support of WCOE.

The Barbour Group, LLC will be exhibiting at the S.A.M.E. Conference and you can bet Karen Barbour will be showcasing WCOE at her booth. Anyone else from WCOE attending the conference? If so please visit Karen and her team at her booth #1823..



WCOE New York

The NY Chapter raised $750 in donations for Dress For Success, an event they hosted on October 8th. Congratulations on your successful fundraising and community support.

WCOE Kansas City

Elisabeth DeCoursey, past president of WCOE representing Kansas City, Missouri was invited by the United States Secretary of Labor, Keith Sonderling, as part of a Women in Construction Roundtable to discuss Workforce Training. The US Senator from Kansas, Roger Marshall, joined the meeting as well. It was a great opportunity. Attending were the following people:

Elisabeth DeCoursey, KC Testing & WCOE
Fahteema Parrish, Parrish & Sons Construction
Stephanie Isaacson, New Horizons
Sheila Ohrenberg, Sorella Group
Karen Crnkovich, DMC Mechanical
Stephanie Gunter, Gunter Construction & WCOE
A representative of ABC and a representative of Kansas City, Kansas Community College

The 45-minute session was held at a brand new Kansas City, Kansas Community College location where a wonderful training facility for the construction trades was created. KC Testing hired a graduate of their dual enrollment program earlier this summer.

Each participant was given a few minutes for introductions and to identify opportunities for improvement in workforce training for the construction industry, followed by general discussion and a tour of the facility. Elisabeth spoke about the OSHA 10-hour certification and how helpful it would be if training programs included this certification to enable workers to be ready to go on day one of employment. There was a lot of discussion about apprentice programs and Pell grants, and the wrap around services that are needed to support people who are eligible for Pell grants and want the training but can't take unpaid time to participate.

04 • Register now



Free Cocktail Zoom – November 18th 6-8pm – All are welcome.

Michelle Kantor, Esq., a Corporate Alliance Partner, will speak for 30 minutes from, 6:30 to 7 pm on the impact of the new federal small business size standards. We will also have breakout room afterwards for 15 minutes then back to the general zoom for more introductions.

See events page on website for more details. Link to register is https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/itmMumIZQ46aQNE3cDSwkQ

05 • CORPORATE ALLIANCE PARTNERS + MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Recognizing Our Corporate Alliance Partners

Thank you to our Corporate Alliance Partners

Ally

TRAVELERS

Ally

Constellation.

CONSTELLATION

Business

AMERICAN ARBITRATION ASSOCIATION

Supporter

GOVCON SMALL BUSINESS COALITION

Business

Berkley Surety

BERKLEY SURETY

Business

ELINT CAPITAL

Business

RLI SURETY

Business

McDonald Hopkins

MCDONALD HOPKINS

06 • READ MORE LIBRARY

SBA Small Business Size Standards - Extended Summary

WCOE submitted lengthy comments on both SBA's proposed Small Business Size Standards and its revised methodology. WCOE expressed concern that proposed increases would undermine opportunities for genuinely small construction businesses to compete for federal contracts and that the methodology used to determine the standards was flawed. WCOE also commented on the proposed change for construction from a receipts-based standard to an employee-based standard and stressed the need to use a Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) measure rather than simple headcount. Following substantial public concern and requests for additional time, SBA extended the comment period by 60 days. The new deadline is November 20, 2026. Proposed Size Standards: SBA-2026-0199. Revised Size Standards Methodology: SBA-2026-0265.

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Surface Transportation Bill + DBE Program - Extended Summary

The future of the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program remains an important issue for women-owned construction firms. The September 25 DOT changes eliminate automatic presumptions of social and economic disadvantage based on race or sex. Businesses must instead establish disadvantage through individualized assessments, and existing DBEs face reevaluation that state certification programs generally must complete by December 24, 2026. The House proposal includes five-year DBE reauthorization with guardrails but without the presumptions contained in

earlier authorizations. The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved the bipartisan five-year BUILD America 250 Act on May 22 by a 62-2 vote. Congress subsequently extended existing surface transportation authorizations through December 11. WCOE will continue tracking legislation and its implications for women-owned transportation construction businesses. DOT's status site provides a link for each state; a "Complete" status refers to completion of firm recertification.

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Congress After the Election - Extended Summary

Congress is moving into its traditional election-period recess so Senate and House members in contested races have time to campaign. The Senate recess is scheduled from October 5 through November 6, while House members are already back in their districts. Congress will reconvene after the November 3 midterm elections. Congress already approved temporary government funding and extended existing surface transportation programs through December 11, 2026, taking a potential government shutdown off the table until after the election. After the elections, Congress is expected to return for a lame-duck session with federal appropriations, expiring program authorizations, annual defense legislation, infrastructure permitting reform and longer-term surface transportation funding on the agenda. The current Congress concludes in January 2027, and legislation not enacted before then generally must be reintroduced in the new Congress.

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Election Outlook - Extended Source Summary

The updated source draft discusses the narrow balance of power in Congress and highlights several Senate races receiving attention, including Alaska, Georgia, Iowa, Maine, North Carolina, Ohio and Texas, with Michigan and New Hampshire also noted as states to watch. The draft emphasizes that the November results will shape congressional leadership and the legislative environment for small business and federal contracting issues in 2027, and encourages members to vote.

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Member Spotlight - Jean Bjork

In 2018 she was inducted into Alameda County's Women's Hall of Fame. Her company joined the union back in 2011 and was named A Best Place to Work in 2023 by the San Francisco Business Times & Silicon Vally Business Journal. He daughter Jessica Bork-Madrigal began to take high interest in the company when its focused pivoted to commercial construction. She is now an Owner/VP of the company and has stated openly that she loves what she does and loves being in the construction space. It is truly a successful story about transitioning the company for future growth and seeing Jean's legacy continue enforce.

For more information about Jean please visit https://www.bjorkconstruction.com/

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