

Weeks on Women

Julie Weeks is President and CEO of Womenable, a research, program and policy development consultancy whose mission is to enable women's entrepreneurship worldwide. She is co-chair of AWBC's Public Policy Council and an AWBC member.

Unless, like Rip Van Winkle, you have just awakened from a long slumber under a tree, you know that in just over a month's time – on January 20th – Barack Obama will be sworn in as the 44th President of the United States.



Julie Weeks

But in the two weeks immediately prior to that historic event, there will be some other very important changes coming that I'd like to draw your attention to – the seating of the 111th Congress and the populating of congressional committees.

The next Congress opens on January 6, 2009 with the swearing in of new and returning members, after which comes the mad scramble for committee assignments (of course, that has in reality already begun). As you all know, the committee relationships most dear to women's business centers are those we have with the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship and the House Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Senator Mary Landrieu (D-La) has just been named the incoming of the Senate Small Business Committee. At this point, it looks as though Senator Snowe (R-ME) will remain as the Ranking Minority Member. On the House side, no word yet on whether or not Representative Nydia Velazquez (D-NY) and Ranking Member Steve Chabot (R-OH) will remain in the leadership of that committee. Keeping tabs on the leadership of these committees is important to AWBC overall, and to each and every one of you. We're keeping an eye on this for you and will keep you all informed.

Equally important, especially to each of you, is seeing what shakes out vis-à-vis the membership composition of these two committees. Currently, there are 19 members of the Senate Committee (10 Democrats and 9 Republicans) and 33 members of the House Committee (18 Democrats and 15 Republicans). The partisan split of each committee changes each Congress according to the partisan share of the overall vote – so the 111th Congress will likely see the assignments tip in favor of one or two more Democrats on each committee.

It behooves us all to learn whether or not our Congressional representatives have been seated on either of these committees, and to introduce or reintroduce ourselves to these members and especially their staffs. Even if you have a returning member of Congress, take a look, because committee assignments change each session.

Click on the links I've given you below, and monitor them to learn more about whether your US Representative or Senator will become or will remain a member of the House or Senate Small Business Committee. As soon as those committee assignments have been made, we'll let you all know.

Next month – honing our messages to our political leaders. A key mantra we should all sing in unison: investing in women's entrepreneurship is an economic stimulus package! In the meantime, happy holidays.

~ Julie Weeks

Guide to Members of the 111th Congress:

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/pictorial/111th/newmems.html>

House Committee on Small Business:

Majority site: <http://www.house.gov/smbiz/>

Minority site: <http://republicans.smbiz.house.gov/>

Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship:

Majority site: <http://sbc.senate.gov/>

Minority site: <http://sbc.senate.gov/republican/index.html>

US House of Representatives: <http://www.house.gov/>

US Senate: <http://www.senate.gov/>

Have you renewed your AWBC Membership?

The Association of Women's Business Center's (AWBC)

Renew today and keep up to date with the AWBC newsletter, featuring best practices, success stories, latest WBC news and more!

PLUS.. join us for FREE WBC monthly training calls through the AWBC Money Talk\$ series and the AWBC School series!

Renew Your Membership Today!

GO TO

www.RunMyClub.com/AWBC/Renewal.asp

AWBC School Training THIS WEEK!

- **Working with your local, state and federal representatives** with Haidee Stith and Fran Pastore / Dec. 18 at 3pm Eastern

For info and registration go to

<http://www.runmyclub.com/awbc/eventcalendar.asp>

DID YOU MISS THE November AWBC CALL?

09 Planning and Forecasting for your WBC with WBC Directors, Kathryn Cariglino & Sharon O'Donoghue.

Members can Download the recording for free! Go to

<http://www.runmyclub.com/awbc/Resources.asp?RID=1>

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Ann Marie Almeida
AWBC President and CEO

A YEAR END NOTE

You and I live in an increasingly complex yet dynamically connected world; a world that demands thoughtful responses and sustainable solutions.



Ann Marie Almeida

As our economic, social and community landscapes continue to be effected by both micro and macro decisions, the need for informed, empowered, visionary leaders with entrepreneurial skill and social change imagination is vital if we are to not only survive but prosper in the days and decades ahead.

Since 1998, the Association of Women's Business Centers has had the privilege of working with Women's Business Centers throughout the United States; WBCs that have the intention, intensity and capacity to make positive and lasting contributions to our families, communities, and the world.

Our changing situations create a demand for entrepreneurial leaders to help rebuild the fabric of our world. Leaders with advocacy skills, an entrepreneurial spirit and commitment gained through the programs and services offered by the AWBC and our network of WBC's. Our clients and colleagues are transformed into leaders by WBC training and by building invaluable networks of relationships that allow them to offer solutions of hope to local communities.

When we connect our dreams with actions and a social challenge with a deliverable solution, we begin to create a life of congruency and integrity. All of our undertakings are in support of a dream for which our Nation and the global community are the beneficiaries. The impact of the AWBC and our Member WBCs is demonstrated by the individuals empowered, the communities re-vitalized, the families fed and educated, and the lives of women and men reinvented.

Together our voices articulate real dreams and offer real solutions. We thank you for taking this journey with us. My gratitude extends to the AWBC Board of Directors, our Member WBCs and all our friends and colleagues who continue to work alongside one another to make our mission a reality. May 2009 be especially rewarding and prosperous for you and yours.

THIS MONTH!

Watch for AWBC Member Survey!

In response to your request for more information about what your fellow members are doing to manage, lead and improve their WBCs, we will be conducting the first of our Quarterly AWBC Member Surveys this month. Watch your email this month for an invitation to participate! Results will be shared in January, 2009!

MEET THE MEMBERS

By Barbara Wrigley, Executive Director, Women's Business Center of Northern VA and AWBC Board Vice Chair.

MEET Sharon Miller

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CEO, Renaissance
Entrepreneurship Center
San Francisco, California



At the age of five, Sharon Miller was already working as an independent contractor for her dad's steel fabrication business in New York. She was paid fifty cents per project plus an ice cream sundae! When she was twenty, her dad switched from steel to flowers and became a florist, and somewhere along the line, she developed a passion for economic justice and entrepreneurial empowerment. "People are ingenious," she said in a recent interview, "they come up with great business ideas, models, and innovative ways of running their businesses."

With a degree from the University of California at Berkeley in Conservation and Resource Studies, Sharon has approached her work with non-profits by looking at them as eco-systems. She has always worked in the social services arena and held posts at WNYC, New York Public Radio, City Harvest, and American Jewish World Service, which had her traveling from to Latin America, Africa, Russia and Ukraine, before taking over the helm of the Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center (Renaissance) nine and a half years ago. Renaissance owns its own building in downtown San Francisco, has another location in Bayview Hunters Point and added a third location in East Palo Alto earlier this year. All of their programs are available in both English and Spanish, and she coordinates a staff of 22 as well as 40 outside consultants. They provide services for entrepreneurs from idea feasibility to business planning to launch and growth and pride themselves on being available for the life cycle of a client's business. Sharon is also a member of the AWBC board of directors.

The youngest of three children, Sharon married for the first time at the age of 46, "after quite a few close calls," she said. She has two step-sons and is expecting to become a first time grandmother next March. She alternates between reading novels (most recently, *The Painted Veil* by W. Somerset Maugham, 1925) and books on professional development (currently Jodi Davis' book, *The Promise of Potential*). Her favorite place to collect her thoughts is in her backyard flowering garden in Bernal Heights; and if you opened her refrigerator, you'd find leftovers from last Saturday's dinner party, and a lot more food than she had when she was single! Sharon's husband runs the California Reinvestment Coalition, and they met while working together since Renaissance is a coalition member. For the holidays, they will be going skiing, and Sharon, an avid traveler, is hoping she'll be gifted with more airline tickets." In recent years, she has visited Kenya, Tanzania, Alaska and Brazil.

There's a lot to like, and a lot to learn from Sharon Miller. Learn more about her center at www.rencenter.org.

Happy Holiday!

Remember to support your local women's businesses by buying local! See you in 2009! Rita V