

Thank you, Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Committee.

I was grateful to hear this Committee produced findings last month highlighting many of the issues that Mr. Schrader and I are attempting to address with H.R. 3980 -- the Small Business Opportunity Act of 2012. That's why I'm here today. I want to support the inclusion of this bipartisan bill's language in the National Defense Authorization Act, along with the other bipartisan reforms proposed by the Small Business Committee.

This bill, along with the others, are jobs bills. In my corner of Southwest Washington, we've suffered from double-digit unemployment going on more than 3 years. Yet we have more than 900 small business contractors in my district alone who could benefit from this bill. And small businesses are the ones who create 7 out of 10 new jobs in this country.

The Small Business Opportunity Act seeks to improve acquisition planning, training, and the roles of the Procurement Center Representatives, or PCR's -- all of which were addressed by the bipartisan Panel on Business Challenges.

The Panel, led by Mr. Shuster, made several recommendations that can be addressed by this bill.

First: improved coordination between senior acquisition officials and small business advocates. The Small Business Opportunities Act accomplishes this by involving small business advocates from the beginning of the acquisition process. Under this improved system, these advocates can begin removing barriers to small business participation early in the planning process. Currently, these advocates aren't consulted until the end of the process, minimizing the benefit to small business.

Second, Panel Recommendation 3.9 states that the “Secretary of Defense should make small business programs an emphasis item when training the acquisition workforce.” Currently, contracts that are best suited for small businesses are frequently handled by lower level contracting personnel who are not adequately trained. This problem is not unique to the Department of Defense; it happens government-wide. My bill would improve this by providing training to all contract specialists on small business contracting programs. The result? A well-educated acquisition workforce, and clearer roles for small business advocates who will no longer have to spend as much time providing training. This way, they will be better able to assist small businesses.

Finally, the Small Business Opportunity Act sharpens and modernizes the job descriptions of PCR’s. PCR’s work in agencies throughout the federal government. Their role is to review acquisition plans with an eye toward increasing small business participation.

Mr. Chairman, small businesses across the country are eager to compete for federal contracts, and the byproduct will be new jobs created. Therefore, I want to thank you for considering including this language in the NDAA, and offer my support for the inclusion of this bill and the other procurement reforms proposed by the Small Business Committee.

I thank the ranking member, the chairman, Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Velazquez, and my partner in this effort, Mr. Schrader and I yield back the remainder of my time.