

Rep. Shankland: Opposes the GOP attack on women-owned construction businesses

Posted on Tuesday, Dec 4, 2018

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For Immediate Release Contact: Rep. Katrina Shankland

December 4, 2018 Office: (608) 267-9649

(Madison, Wis.) — Yesterday, Republican members of the Joint Finance Committee caved to Senator Duey Stroebel's attack on federal transportation funding, voting late last night to advance the "Swap Bill," section 17 of 2017 AB 1069, to be debated and voted on during today's extraordinary lame duck session of the Wisconsin Legislature. The legislation guts requirements that protect small Wisconsin construction-related companies. Stripping federal funding from all but the largest transportation projects means that many fewer projects will be required to participate in the federal Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program. The DBE Program ensures that nearly 650 women-owned businesses certified for the DBE Program have a shot at bidding on transportation projects.

"I bought my construction business less than two years ago, and the DBE Program was a significant factor in my decision to risk my life savings," said Anna Prinsen, owner of Modern Crane of Onalaska, Wisconsin. "Had I known what Senator Stroebel planned to do to the DBE Program, I may have made a different decision. If this bill goes through, it will impact the future of my company. This bill is very anti-woman."

"The DBE Program is intended to help small women-owned and minority-owned businesses in Wisconsin break into the construction industry," said Rep. Katrina Shankland, a member of the Joint Finance Committee. "Many of these companies simply are not equipped to work on mega-projects. By forcing so many federal

dollars into the largest projects, Senator Stroebel's bill could essentially regulate small business out of many transportation projects in Wisconsin."

Christy Wade, owner of Endeavor-based Arbor Green, said she was "blindsided" by the Swap Bill. "The DBE program helped my company secure work on the Marquette Interchange – a three-year job that was a turning point for my business," said Wade. "Without the DBE Program to help network with big contractors over the course of several years, I wouldn't have been able to gain the experience needed to work on a big project like the Marquette interchange."

"Why Senator Stroebel would seek to limit opportunities for women-owned businesses is beyond me," said Rep. Shankland, "But the bottom line is that fewer DBE projects means fewer opportunities for small businesses. If Senator Stroebel intended his Swap Bill to gut the DBE Program without telling the rest of us on Joint Finance, then shame on him, and if he proposed the Swap Bill without knowing enough about the DBE Program to understand the negative impact on small, Wisconsin businesses, then shame on him for that too. Either way, his political machinations have devastating consequences for Wisconsin businesses."

"Simply put, Senator Stroebel's Swap Bill is bad for women-owned businesses in Wisconsin. Democrats are united with Wisconsin's DBE-certified business owners," said Rep. Shankland. "It's incredibly disappointing that Republicans on the Joint Finance Committee voted in lockstep to advance this proposal."