

Cosponsor the Federal Government Advertising Equity Accountability Act

Cosponsors: Barbara Lee, Moore

Dear Colleague:

Please join me in encouraging fair access to federal advertising contracts by becoming a cosponsor of the Federal Government Advertising Equity Accountability Act (H.R. 2576). This bill would require all federal agencies to include in their annual budget requests to Congress the amount they spend on advertising contracts with small disadvantaged businesses (SDBs) and businesses owned by minorities and women. Federal agencies would be required to provide prior and projected total expenditures for such contracts.

In 2007, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) examined spending on advertising contracts with minority-owned businesses by five agencies—the Department of Defense, the Department of the Treasury, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of the Interior, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration—and found that only five percent of the \$4.3 billion available for advertising contracts went to minority businesses. In light of these concerning figures, several Members of Congress and I sent a letter to the GAO in April 2016 requesting updated information on the amount of federal advertising dollars spent with SDBs and businesses owned by minorities and women. That GAO report, released in July 2018, showed that in fiscal year 2017, only 16 percent of the federal government’s advertising contract obligations went to SDBs and businesses owned by minorities and women.

The federal government is the largest advertiser in the United States, and it has an obligation to ensure equitable access to its contracts for SDBs and businesses owned by minorities and women. The GAO’s findings make it clear that there is still much progress to be made.

The regular collection of information on federal advertising contracts with SDBs and businesses owned by women and minorities, along with the provision of this information to legislators and stakeholders, is essential to bridging the divide between current statistics and a more inclusive advertising landscape. This bill would achieve these goals while also promoting transparency and encouraging federal agencies to strive to reach minorities, who often receive their daily news from smaller media outlets that serve communities of color. The requirement that agencies submit prior and projected information regarding the amount of advertising dollars spent with SDBs and businesses owned by minorities and women would allow federal agencies to evaluate their progress over time. The regular collection of this information would also demonstrate that the promotion of equity in advertising, and in all areas of government, should be a continuous effort that is central to the mission of every agency.

I invite you to join me in this effort and become an original cosponsor of this important bill. To be an original cosponsor, please contact Blake Paradis of my staff at 202-225-8050 or blake.paradis@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Holmes Norton