



HONORING MINORITY AND WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS



TOP 100 MBE AWARDS™ CEREMONY

Contact: Margy LaFond 443-280-4663

Are You Stimulated Yet?

By Sharon Roberson Pinder

From Wall Street to Main Street people are lauding the *2009 Economic Stimulus Package*. This \$789 billion recovery measure, signed by President Obama on Feb. 17, is the largest government fiscal reaction to a recession since World War II. Add to that the \$2.5 trillion bailout plan for the financial industry, and you have a whole lot of money floating around. So we know what's in it for Wall Street and Main Street, but what about the small, minority and women business owners on the Side Street? Those small, women and minority owned businesses, which have been historically underutilized and undercapitalized are essential to this nation's economic recovery.

The President, the Congress and the nation's Governors have promised a transparent process and government accountability. Unfortunately government accountability and oversight occurs long after a contract is awarded. It is far easier for an agency to do what it wants and apologize afterward, than to do the right thing up-front. Especially since each appropriation in the *Stimulus Package* has a tight timeframe in which the money must be spent.

Last month, *Government Executive Magazine* contained an article talking about the dearth of trained government officials available to write the Statements of Work and the Requests for Proposals needed to start the contract process. For those of us on the Side Streets, at best this will mean an extremely short RFP response period. At worst, agencies will either add tasks to the current contracts of large vendors, bundle contracts, find ways to issue sole source contracts as they did in response to Hurricane Katrina, or waive the small, woman and minority business goal requirements in their efforts to spend their money timely.

The MBE community must band together to ensure this does not happen. Women and minority businesses must not be forgotten in the rush towards recovery. We did not cause the problems that led to this recession, but we certainly can be part of the solution. It is important that our elected officials hear our collective voice and **require** agencies to allow full and open competition for all these contracts. Our government must stimulate the economy by stimulating opportunities and ensuring that actual payments flow to real companies for meaningful work. Economic reform requires enforcement and oversight to ensure agencies adhere to their small and minority business goals.

Sharon Roberson Pinder is the CEO of the Pinder Group, founder of the Top 100 MBE Awards Ceremony and the Center for Business Inclusion and Diversity, Inc.

For More Information Call: The Center for Business Inclusion and Diversity at 1.410.489.7098
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