

# Sustaining Businesses, Creating Jobs

Newsletter of the  
Regional Council  
Presidents of the  
National Minority  
Supplier Development  
Council

## Statement from Congresswoman Barbara Lee



Congresswoman Barbara Lee  
(D-CA 9th District)

Congresswoman Barbara Lee was first elected to represent California's 9th Congressional District in 1998 in a special election to fill the seat of retiring Congressman Ron Dellums. A member of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, Congresswoman Lee serves on the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, the State and Foreign Operations and the Financial Services Subcommittees. Additionally, she serves on the Foreign Affairs Committee on the subcommittees on Western Hemisphere and Africa and Global Health. Congresswoman Lee was sworn in as the Chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) on January 6, 2009. The 42-member CBC is one of the longest standing caucuses in Congress and is often referred to as the "conscience of the Congress" for their willingness to tackle the most serious social and economic issues facing minorities in the United States.

Congresswoman Lee is a strong supporter of minority and women owned businesses. As she states, "Minority and women-owned businesses are a critical component to our economy. In these tough economic times it is critical that we ensure that these businesses have access to the capital and resources that they will need to succeed. I will continue to work to ensure that minority and women-owned businesses have equal access to federal dollars which the Congressional Black Caucus has worked so hard to provide."

California's ninth Congressional District encompasses most of Alameda County, including the Cities of Albany, Ashland, Berkeley, Castro Valley, Cherryville, Emeryville, Fairview, Oakland and Piedmont.

Born in El Paso Texas, Congresswoman Lee graduated from Mills College in Oakland and received her MSW from the University of California in Berkeley.

Before being elected to Congress, she served in the California State Assembly from 1990-1996 and in the California State Senate from 1996-1998.

## PUBLISHER'S NOTES

### A Partnership to Achieve Mutually Beneficial Goals

The concept behind *Sustaining Businesses, Creating Jobs* is quite simple. We, the regional council Presidents of the National Minority Supplier Development Council, seek to partner with governmental officials, in both the legislative and executive branches, to achieve mutually beneficial goals. It is our intention to use this newsletter as a vehicle to foster awareness and action that will nurture and sustain legitimate minority businesses and create jobs.

We believe that minority business survival depends upon working together with decision makers to keep our diverse communities economically stable.

Each issue of this publication will feature a regional council president and a minority business owner who are diligently involved in job creation. Additionally, a federal Congressional leader from that District who understands and works toward the strengthening of diverse businesses will be portrayed and will receive positive exposure to the minority business community. (continued on page 3.)

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## Working on a New Spend



Scott Vowels, President  
Northern California Minority  
Supplier Development Council

As the president of the Northern California Minority Supplier Development Council (NCMSDC), Scott Vowels has only been in his present position for a month, but his vision, commitment and innovation have already impacted the advocacy group.

Mr. Vowels, who served in a similar position in Alabama at the South Regions Minority Business Council for five years, acknowledges that while the economic situation in the Bay Area is not great, it is fairing better than other areas of the country. For example, there are regions where the automotive or manufacturing industries play a large role in the success or failure of the economy.

“Technology is a large part of the economy in this area,” Mr. Vowels said. “For instance, Apple is here. Everyone owns an iPod now. We are also fortunate to have Safeway headquartered here as well as several banks, such as Union Bank and Wells Fargo. PG&E, Chevron and Cisco are here as well and part of the council’s corporate community.”

As might be expected, corporations have not completely pulled back support of the council and its diversity efforts, but they are requiring

more emphasis on the value proposition. They want to know what their dollars are buying. Mr. Vowels admits, that like many profit and non-profit businesses, the council has to re-think its business model.

NCMSDC has implemented endeavors to help MBEs retool, expand their potential markets and remain viable. Business as usual will not work. Meetings with corporations and MBEs are held for information gathering—seeking ways for the council to enhance its value to all its stakeholders.

One program the council began was the 360 Degree Spend. Mr. Vowels describes it as a way for all those involved to take ownership of each other’s success. No longer is it only about corporation to MBE spend, but the relationship has enlarged to include MBE to corporation spend and MBE to MBE spend by supporting each other. “We all have skin in this game,” Mr. Vowels said.

The council also helps MBEs retool by being a conduit and an active participant in making minority suppliers aware of opportunities made available by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, commonly known as the stimulus package. A portion of the council’s Web site is devoted to the latest information on where the possible contracts are.

One of the six employees at the council works exclusively on stimulus package information, including collaborating with the Bay Area ethnic chambers to provide the council with the most complete, up-to-date aggregate information for its MBEs.

Mr. Vowels is adamant about the need for support from every level of the government to assist in the sustainability of minority businesses.

“We all know that small businesses create 90-95% of the jobs in the country,” Mr. Vowels said. “Most small businesses fall into the small business category. Legislators should care because small businesses, minority businesses, create the business infrastructure for their districts. These are their constituents. They are the easiest way to an economic turnaround.” ■

### Jethro Joseph Candidate for MBDA Director



After nearly forty years of serving the business community, former Chrysler Senior Executive of Supplier Diversity, Jethro Joseph, is a candidate for the Director of the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), U.S. Department of Commerce.

During his tenure at Chrysler, Joseph coordinated all supplier development and quality improvement activities for diverse suppliers. As a result of his leadership, purchases from minority suppliers with Chrysler increased from \$1.5 billion in 1996 to \$4.9 billion in 2008.

Additionally, Joseph spearheaded the effort to expand the involvement of veteran-, women- and minority-owned businesses with other Fortune 500 companies.

Jethro Joseph is a certified public accountant and holds an undergraduate degree from Morris Brown College and an MBA from Wayne State University. ■

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Jonathan Tsao  
Founder & Principal  
TSAO Design Group

After nearly three decades as an entrepreneur, Jonathan Tsao was named the Northern California Minority Supplier Development Council's 2008 Supplier of the Year. He has offices in San Francisco and Miami. And he is not one to allow the evening news or what others say to determine his views on the business climate.

In 1981, Mr. Tsao founded the architecture and interior design firm TSAO Design Group (tsaodesign.com), after graduating cum laude from the Graduate School of Architecture and Planning at Columbia University and working for several top architectural firms in New York and San Francisco. The firm has corporate, institutional and private clients throughout the United States. His clients include the San Francisco International Airport, Charles Schwab, Citibank, Bank of America, Kaiser Permanente, Genentech, Sephora and Gap.

Reared in New York City, Mr. Tsao, who is of Chinese descent, had the advantages of a global view while still a child. Both his parents worked for the United Nations, which allowed him the opportunity to celebrate diverse cultures on a personal level.

TSAO Design Group has completed projects with a number of high-profile clients, but Mr. Tsao said two of his proudest accomplishments would not have been possible without a

supplier diversity connection. The first was the remodeling of the Asian Art Museum while it resided in Golden Gate Park. The second supplier diversity project was the Westfield San Francisco Center, where Bloomingdales is the anchor for four floors of high-end retail, restaurant, entertainment and office tenants. Both projects won numerous design awards.

While having been in business for over 28 years, Mr. Tsao has only been involved with the Northern California council for four years. Because of his experience dealing with corporate clients, he sees this as an opportunity to share what he has learned with other minority business enterprises (MBEs), especially those who are start-ups. However, he doesn't believe he knows it all. Mr. Tsao was impressed with a workshop at the National Minority Supplier Development Council conference in Las Vegas last year. A workshop explaining the importance of relationship building between professional services companies and corporate clients was an invaluable resource, he said.

TSAO Design Group employs over 20 people in its San Francisco office and 10 in Miami. But the company is involved with job creation in a more sustaining way. It does business with a high proportion of other minority businesses.

"I didn't specifically make a point of going after minority businesses," Mr. Tsao said. "But because the Bay Area is a such a diverse community, there is a plethora of extremely capable engineers: structural, mechanical, electrical who are also MBEs...all the consultants we need for medium to large-size projects

are minority firms."

Mr. Tsao admits that times have been better, but he refuses to let doom and gloom take over his outlook and his approach to businesses. "It doesn't change what we have to do as entrepreneurs, visionaries and as business people. We just have to embrace it with more passion." ■

**Publisher's Notes**

(continued)

We believe the success of our respective communities is very often dependent on the availability of family supporting jobs in that community.

Given that minority-owned businesses hire more minorities than non minority businesses, their success is not an option but an obligation. Public and private contracts allow legitimate American minority-owned businesses to hire people of color, who can then purchase homes, educate their children and maintain the vitality of the community. Legitimate minority-owned businesses create legitimate jobs, a strong tax revenue base, and strong, safe communities.

We know the importance and need for strong minority communities. We know that many federal legislators and executives share our vision and values.

Again, we seek a true partnership and a working relationship to sustain legitimate minority-owned businesses that create jobs, which stabilize the minority communities of our Nation.

We believe it is now time for us to work toward achieving mutually beneficial goals.

Floyd Rose, Ph.D.  
Publisher ■

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