

The WIT Advocate

An Update from the WIT Advocacy Committee June 2005

The WIT Advocate is a quarterly update published by the WIT Advocacy Committee as a service to WIT members. Our objective is to provide you with information and tools related to legislative and administrative initiatives that impact the business and work environment. Special emphasis is placed on issues concerning women and the technology community. We're interested in hearing comments, questions, or requests for issues you'd like to see covered in upcoming newsletters. You can contact any of the Advocacy Committee as follows:

Beth Lalik, Chair: elalik@pillsburywinthrop.com
Wendy Freiman, Co-Chair: friemanw@verizon.net
Julie Thompson: Co-Chair: julie@changeworkscoaching.com

Upcoming WIT Advocacy Events

We're currently organizing for upcoming WIT Advocacy events and have some preliminary plans in the pipeline, so stay tuned to future issues of the WIT Advocate. Also, if you have ideas or suggestions about an advocacy-related topic you'd like to see spotlighted in an event, let us know!

Recent WIT Advocacy Events—A Seasoned Advocate Shares Her Story

Marjorie Sonnenfeldt spoke to WIT members and the Advocacy Committee on April 14, 2005. Ms. Sonnenfeldt retired from a distinguished career in public relations in 1998 as a Senior Vice President of Fleishman-Hillard, Inc. She shared the story of her 17-year campaign to influence the executive and legislative branches of government on a single issue. Her efforts resulted in presidential statements and speeches as well as numerous congressional resolutions. Although Ms. Sonnenfeldt's issue was not related to technology (she campaigned to prevent religious persecution in Iran), the techniques and guiding principles she used apply to advocacy in all fields:

Public Policy Advocacy Guidelines

1. Make sure your issue is compelling and your story is well-rehearsed.
2. Do your homework and keep doing it: your facts must be air-tight.
3. Don't exaggerate in telling your story.
4. Find and use an articulate spokesperson from the community you are representing.
5. Approach multiple contacts in government and multiple branches of government simultaneously.
6. Get bipartisan support.
7. Determine and leverage congressional staffers who have been delegated significant authority by their members.
8. When possible, organize a group of congressional staffers rather than meeting one-on-one.
9. Don't plan on any visit with those you hope to influence lasting longer than 15 minutes and make sure that you have an answer when someone asks, "What do you want us to do?"
10. Help congressional staff members draft language for resolutions or bills (or do it for them).
11. Keep the faith. Advocacy requires persistence in the face of adversity.

Advocacy At Large -- News & Updates

The Advocacy Committee reports on several developments in the government, private industry and legal communities that impact women, technology and business:

Industry

- ***Companies Owned by Women Set the Pace in Small Business:*** Companies owned by women are growing at a rate that outpaces all small businesses in the nation, according to the Center for Women's Business Research Data. To read more, visit http://www.wipp.org/Press/20040518_pace.html.

Government

- ***Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Proposes Changes to RFID Requirements:*** Standards are emerging to support the requirement that all suppliers to DoD provide Radio Frequency Identification, or RFID, tags with their hardware and parts shipments. RFID is intended to enable hands-off processing of materiel transactions, enabling the DoD to re-allocate critical manpower resources to warfighting functions and to streamline business processes. RFID uses tags and readers to maintain visibility of assets that move large distances in a short time. For more information visit <http://www.acq.osd.mil/log/rfid/index.htm>.

Education

- ***Summers Remarks on Women and Science:*** Larry Summers, President of Harvard University, touched off a firestorm of controversy when he addressed the National Bureau of Economic Research Conference on Diversifying the Science and Engineering Workforce in January 2005.

In discussing the reason for the under-representation of women in many scientific and technical professions, Summers remarked: "It does appear that on many, many different human attributes - height, weight, propensity for criminality, overall IQ, mathematical ability, scientific ability - there is relatively clear evidence that whatever the difference in means - which can be debated - there is a difference in the standard deviation, and variability of a male and a female population. And that is true with respect to attributes that are and are not plausibly, culturally determined." To read Summers speech in its entirety, visit <http://www.president.harvard.edu/speeches/2005/nber.html>.

Women's organizations and many newspaper opinion-editorial page writers responded immediately and the war of words continued for months. The National Organization for Women (NOW), for example, called for Summers to resign, pointing out that his speech was "more than an example of personal sexism. . . a clue to why women have not been more fully accepted and integrated into the tenured faculty at Harvard since he has been president." To read the full response from NOW, visit <http://www.now.org/press/01-05/01-20-Harvard.html>.

And for another perspective altogether, read Washington Post Staff Writer Sally Quinn's "[The Misguided Mathematics of Equating Women and Men.](#)"

Other

- **Women and Information Technology Symposium Meets in Baltimore:** More than 250 women from more than 20 countries gathered in Baltimore this June for a symposium organized by the [University of Maryland, Baltimore County's Center for Women and Information Technology](#). The purpose of the gathering was to create a five-year plan to help women around the world gain greater access to, and leadership in, information technology - from the corporate world to the public policy arena. To read more, visit <http://tinyurl.com/bb3wb>.
- **Information Technology Transfer Supports Social Transformation for Women:** A women's advocacy group known as Women's Information Technology Transfer (WITT) launched a portal site in March 2005 to link women's organizations and feminist advocates for the Internet in Eastern and Central Europe. The portal, www.witt-project.net, provides a communications medium that collectively supports Central and Eastern European women in developing the web as an instrument in their social activism. WITT is an organization committed to bringing women's actions, activities and struggles into the spotlight, promoting the use of free software as a way to highlight women's voices. To learn more, visit www.witt-project.net.