

Washington State Entrepreneurs Urge Congress to Protect AI and Digital Tools Essential to Small Business Growth

Five women-owned businesses from Washington State were selected by Meta leadership to travel to Washington, D.C.

WA, UNITED STATES, May 19, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In recognition of National Small Business Week, May 3–9, five women-owned businesses from Washington State were selected by Meta leadership to travel to Washington, D.C., to advocate for small businesses and highlight the importance of protecting digital tools such as personalized advertising and AI-powered technologies that help entrepreneurs grow, reach customers, and compete in today's economy.



"Being able to share our voice with our representatives was an honor"

Representing Washington State were Diane Najm, Founder/ CEO of Designa AI; Erin Alexander, Founder/CEO of Finally Social; Valarie L. Harris, Founder/CEO of Varris Marketing; Heather Saulsbury, Co-Founder and CEO of PNWBUSHCRAFT; and Jen Jedda, Founder/CEO of JJCaprices.

During their visit to Washington, D.C., the group met with staff from U.S. Senator Patty Murray's office to discuss the critical role digital tools play in the success of small businesses. The entrepreneurs shared how personalized advertising helps them reach the right audiences, maximize limited marketing budgets, and increase sales, while AI-powered tools help streamline operations, save time, and improve competitiveness in an increasingly digital marketplace.

Together, the women entrepreneurs represented the voices of small businesses across Washington State, sharing firsthand insight into both the opportunities and challenges created by digital transformation. Valarie L. Harris emphasized the importance of accessibility and fairness in technology policy, stating: "My focus is on fair access to digital platforms, responsible AI use, and policies that simplify—not complicate—the realities facing small business owners

who are doing everything right but still struggling to be seen. In addition, "Diane Najm highlighted the importance of inclusive policymaking and responsible AI "As an advocate for small businesses, especially women-owned businesses, I believe AI legislation should support responsible innovation while ensuring minority and underserved communities are not overlooked. Personalized advertising and AI tools are essential for small and microbusinesses to grow, compete, and reach customers affordably. Furthermore, Erin Alexander spoke about the role AI can play in empowering entrepreneurs: "This year, I'm focused on how AI can help small businesses work smarter, show up more consistently, and compete with larger companies without losing their personal voice or human connection. As a woman-owned, American Indian small business owner, I see AI as an opportunity to make marketing more accessible, efficient, and empowering for entrepreneurs who are already wearing every hat in their business."

Reflecting on the experience, Heather Saulsbury shared: "It was incredible to have the opportunity to network with small business owners from around the country, speak directly with Meta executives, and share the perspective of a Washington State small business with Senator Patty Murray's team."

According to estimates shared during the event, Meta's advertising tools are linked to more than 100,000 jobs and approximately \$16 billion in annual economic activity in Washington State. Roughly 75,000 small businesses in the state use AI tools regularly to streamline operations, and nearly three-quarters of businesses that advertise say digital ads are the most effective way to reach customers.

Collectively, the group emphasized the importance of addressing the advertising cost gap between small and large businesses, noting that restrictions on targeted advertising could significantly limit small businesses' ability to reach customers and remain competitive in the digital economy. Najm stated 'Main Street businesses face very different challenges and resource limitations than large corporations. Policymakers must protect access to the digital tools small businesses rely on every day to succeed in today's economy.'

Participating in the Meta Boost event provided these entrepreneurs with a unique opportunity to share their stories, connect with fellow business owners from across the country, and advocate for the future of small businesses nationwide. "Small businesses are the heart of our communities," the group shared collectively. "We are proud to represent Washington State's small business community and grateful to Meta for providing a platform to amplify the voices of entrepreneurs whose businesses strengthen our local economies and communities every day."

Their message was clear: for many small businesses in Washington State, digital tools such as personalized advertising and AI are not optional — they are essential to growth, visibility, and long-term success.

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