

# Serious Advocacy in the Grand Canyon State

*ASBA leads the way for small businesses in Arizona*

By Rob Yunich

Director of Communications

The Arizona Small Business Association (ASBA), an NSBA affiliate, resides in one of the most popular vacation spots in the nation. Despite its exotic locale, ASBA is very serious about advocacy—and continues to make a difference for small-business owners in the Grand Canyon State.

“Washington D.C., and Arizona are so many miles apart and yet what’s happening in the nation’s capital affects so many facets of our local business climate,” ASBA Chief Executive Officer Joan Koerber-Walker said. “When the legislative climate gets hot for small businesses in Arizona, our members look to ASBA to amplify their voice with all branches of state and local government. When things heat up in Washington D.C., our affiliation with NSBA allows us to be in the know—be represented—and be heard at the federal level too.”

Much like NSBA, one of ASBA’s top priorities is health care. According to its policy statement, ASBA “supports efforts to make health care coverage affordable through the promotion of tax cuts, and tax credits, retention of medical professionals, tort reform and reduction in government regulation to allow health care insurance providers to offer a wide range of affordable coverage to small Arizona businesses.”

The organization opposes any legislation or regulation that would increase health care costs.

To demonstrate this concept, ASBA offers plans and other health care solutions for its members. ASBA continually strives to find value-added programs for its members, such as the ASBA Group Health Insurance program. Participating in this program provides ASBA member businesses and their employees with access to



PHOTO COURTESY SUSAN RATLIFF

Susan Ratliff (left) serves as president of Exhibit Experts in Phoenix, while Joan Koerber-Walker excels as ASBA’s chief executive officer. Both play a key role in NSBA and ASBA.



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medical, dental, vision and life insurance. ASBA also offers a health care tool-kit to educate members about health programs and options for family members and employees.

Other top issues for ASBA include workforce development, economic development, employer sanctions, transportation, and workers’ compensation. As part of these mission statements, the organization supports efforts to help Arizona companies employ local residents, furnishes young people with the skills needed to make a valuable contribution to the work place, supports initiatives that would spur economic development within the state, and aids efforts to reform workers’ compensation and ensure that it is kept affordable for small businesses.

ASBA also offers a Workers’ Compensation Association Safety Plan, through which they offer free safety training sessions and features safety tips and articles in the monthly newsletter, as well as other benefits.

“What you don’t know can hurt you,” Koerber-Walker said. “Our affiliation with NSBA allows ASBA to keep a finger on the pulse of cur-

rent and proposed legislation and regulations that affect our members. And when action is needed, it is good to know that we have the NSBA team on our side to move our small-business agenda forward.”

## DISTINGUISHED HISTORY

ASBA, founded in 1973, has offices in Phoenix and Tucson. In the more than 30 years since its inception, ASBA has become a voice representing nearly 3,000 member companies and more than 200,000 employees in Arizona. ASBA offers quality education, resources, workshops, mentoring, seminars, legislative advocacy and tools for its member companies to develop and expand.

Voted the number one professional association by *The Phoenix Business Journal’s* “Book of Lists” for four years, the association also acquired a reputation for being one of the best business networking organizations by its members, peers and *The Business Journal*.

ASBA strives to build long-lasting relationships with community partners, government agencies and corporate sponsors to broaden its

influence.

ASBA is led by a distinguished group of small-business owners. Its president, Allan Starr, is president and CEO of Marketing Partners—a strategic marketing, advertising, and public

relations firm founded in 1976. Starr is extremely active in the Phoenix business community and was

elected to ASBA's board in 2002.

Eden Sunshine, the founder and president of the E Quest Development Company, serves as ASBA's vice president. Sunshine helps small businesses become more effective, efficient, and profitable.

Rena A.J. Huber, ASBA's secre-

tary, is director of the APS Academy for the Advancement of Small, Minority, and Women-Owned Enterprises, which mentors small, minority, and/or women-owned businesses in the skills needed to

make their business more successful.

ASBA Treasurer Stephen Heitz is director of interactive development for the Lavidge Company, an advertising, public relations, and interactive technologies agency.

Susan Ratliff is a new member of both the ASBA and NSBA boards.

Ratliff serves as president of Exhibit Experts, which she founded in 1994. The company is the third-largest distributor of portable trade show displays for Featherlite brand exhibits—and the brand's exclusive Arizona

and Nevada representative. Exhibit Experts boasts a 3,300-square-foot showroom in Phoenix.

Koerber-Walker also is a member of

the NSBA board.

For more information about ASBA, call its Phoenix office at 602-265-4563 or its Tucson office at 520-327-0222, or visit [asba.com](http://asba.com).

*ASBA Vice President of Communications Sherry Azzarella contributed to this article. ★*

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