



Washington Presentation²⁰²⁶ Advocate of the Year Award Finalists



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Dr. Whitney Colella

Gaia Energy Research Institute | *Alexandria, Virginia*

Whitney G. Colella, Ph.D., M.B.A., serves as President and Principal Research Engineer of Gaia Energy Research Institute. Gaia specializes in the research, development, modeling, and testing of advanced energy technologies, with a focus on low-carbon energy systems. Dr. Colella is a dedicated advocate for America's small research and technology companies. She has worked to protect and strengthen the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program, including participating in the NSBA Small Business Technology Council's (SBTC) 2025 Defend SBIR advocacy summit. Dr. Colella has received advanced degrees from Princeton, Sussex, Stanford, and Oxford universities, where she's received a variety of fellowship and honors distinctions. Dr. Colella's work has appeared in over 70 journal articles and peer-reviewed reports, as well as 11 book chapters and three textbook editions.



Sanjyot Dunung

Atma Global | *New York City, N.Y.*

Sanjyot Dunung is Founder and CEO of Atma Global, a New York-based digital learning and advisory firm. Under Ms. Dunung's leadership, Atma's suite of services has reached more than 3 million learners worldwide. In 2024, Atma was named to Fast Company's list of the World's Most Innovative Companies. Beyond her work at Atma, Ms. Dunung serves on a variety of boards and councils, including NSBA's Board of Trustees, AI2030's Board of Advisors, and the Truman Center for National Policy's Board of Directors. She also served on President Biden's Foreign Policy Working Group and most recently ran for Congress in Illinois' 8th Congressional District.



LaMar Holliday

Holliday Collaborative Agency | *Indianapolis, Indiana*

LaMar Holliday is CEO of the Holliday Collaborative Agency, a full-service PR, marketing, and government relations firm with locations in Indianapolis and Washington, D.C. The Agency is a certified SBA 8(a), Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), and LGBT Business Enterprise (LGBTBE), and has earned contracts with Indianapolis' highest-profile public-sector and nonprofit clients. For his efforts, Mr. Holliday has been awarded a Gold Stevie Award, multiple Telly Awards, and Best in Show honors from the Public Relations Society of America. In 2024, he was named Minority Business Enterprise of the Year by the City of Indianapolis and Indiana Black Expo and received NSBA's Lewis A. Shattuck Rising Star Award. As an advocate, Mr. Holliday works at the state and federal levels to advance key small business interests. Notably, he is collaborating with Indiana state legislators on a proposal to increase small-business set-asides for state-level contracts. Mr. Holliday is also a registered state and federal lobbyist.



Advocate of the Year Award Finalists Continued

Christine Hopkins

ASCI Federal Services, LLC | *Anchorage, Alaska*



Christine Hopkins is President and CEO of ASCI Federal Services and Advanced Supply Chain (ASCI) Federal Services, LLC, an Alaska-based WOSB and EDWOSB providing logistics, transportation, warehousing, and mission support services to federal and commercial customers. Since becoming majority owner in 2021, Ms. Hopkins has led ASCI through a period of significant growth and transformation, including securing a \$26 million prime contract supporting the U.S. Marine Corps. In 2026, Ms. Hopkins authored the Alaska Logistics Cost Index, an independent research initiative providing policymakers and business leaders with data on the freight and transportation costs affecting Alaska's business community. Ms. Hopkins is an active advocate for small businesses at the state and federal levels. She serves on NSBA's Leadership Council, the Alaska Women's Business Center Advisory Board, and participates in Women Impacting Public Policy. Ms. Hopkins is well-decorated within the small-business community, being named the SBA Small Business Person of the Year for Alaska in 2025 and Alaska's SBA Woman-Owned Small Business of the Year for 2026. She was also named NSBA's Rising Star in 2025.

Anthony Roberts

The Tony Roberts Company | *Fullerton, California*



Tony Roberts is President of Tony Roberts Company, a California-based foodservice company serving the school nutrition industry. A longtime leader in his field, Mr. Roberts was named the SBA Los Angeles District Small Business Person of the Year in 1998 and has received numerous honors from the School Nutrition Association and California School Nutrition Association. Mr. Roberts has spent more than three decades engaging policymakers in Washington, D.C., and more than 25 years advocating at the state level in California. Mr. Roberts has participated in small-business councils and roundtables throughout California and has testified before the USDA and the California State Board of Education. In 2024, Rep. Judy Chu recognized Mr. Roberts for 30 years of advocacy at the federal level.



Thank you, and congratulations to this year's finalists!

The Lewis A. Shattuck Small Business Advocate of the Year Award recognizes small-business owners who go above and beyond in advocating for the small-business community. The award celebrates business leadership, volunteerism, policy engagement, community impact, and the people who help make small-business advocacy possible.

Want to nominate a leader or
apply yourself next year? →



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