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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6350

September 23, 2003

BY FACSIMILE
ORIGINAL BY U.S. MAIL

The Honorable Hector V. Barreto
Administrator
U.S. Small Business Administration
409 Third Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20416

Dear Hector:

It has come to my attention that the Small Business Administration's (SBA) presence at the U.S. Export Assistance Centers (USEAC) are in danger of being withdrawn at the end of this Fiscal Year due to funding constraints.

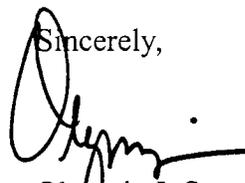
I am deeply concerned about this situation and the effect the SBA's withdrawal from these centers will have on small business exporters and those small businesses and manufacturers seeking to compete in the international market. The SBA plays an important role at USEACs, in particular, with its lending and technical assistance that help small businesses having difficulty obtaining adequate export financing. Currently, USEACs are thinly staffed with only 17 employees located throughout the U.S., each covering several different territories, nonetheless, the output expected from these centers continues to grow.

With the President's recent initiatives to restore manufacturing opportunities in this country and expand trade to enable more U.S. products to compete in the global marketplace, the USEAC program plays an important role to assist small businesses. Both the Congress and the Administration are committed to aiding these businesses in their time of need. To avoid the loss of such a valuable service to small businesses and manufacturers, I strongly urge you to resolve this issue before time is too late.

I would appreciate your advising me of the steps you are taking to address this issue. If you have any questions please have your staff contact Jackie Sierodzinski, Professional Staff Member, at (202) 224-5175.

Thank you for your assistance with this matter.

Sincerely,



Olympia J. Snowe
Chair