

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

June 25, 2010

The Honorable Karen Mills
Administrator
U.S. Small Business Administration
409 3rd Street SW
Washington, DC 20146

Dear Administrator Mills:

Today, as you visit innovative small businesses in Washington State that are benefiting from Small Business Administration programs, I want to convey my determination to ensure that the Small Business Administration has the support it needs from Congress to help create jobs and economic growth. Washington State is a center of pioneering in technology, clean energy, agriculture and a host of other fields. You will see firsthand today some of the promising partnerships we have forged in our aerial robotic technology cluster, and hear some success stories made possible by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. But businesses – like the ones you are visiting today – face challenges sustaining growth in these tough economic times.

Historically, small businesses have been the engines of growth that create jobs and lead us out of recessions. During numerous meetings and roundtables in Washington State, the message that I hear overwhelmingly is that access to credit remains the biggest obstacle for small business growth. Without access to credit from community banks, small businesses cannot create jobs, innovate, or stimulate local economies. They cannot do the things that will spark and sustain economic recovery.

The Small Business Administration plays a vital role in helping small businesses get connected to the information, mentoring, and capital they need to get started, expand, and thrive. I applaud the work the SBA does in getting credit to the small businesses that need it and supporting small business leaders during the economic downturn. However, it is clear that we still have a long way to go.

For the SBA to effectively play its important role in turning the economy around, Congress needs to live up to its obligations and provide your organization with all the tools it needs. Next week, the Senate is scheduled to begin debate on a bill that will create small business jobs by improving access to credit, cutting taxes to strengthen investment and promote entrepreneurship, and make improvements to important SBA programs, including the Section 7(a) and 504 lending programs, as well as trade and export finance programs.

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The important role of these lending programs to our economic recovery cannot be understated. I understand that today you will be visiting Mud Bay, a small business that exemplifies the entrepreneurial energy that flows through my great state. As you know, Mud Bay used a 504 loan, enhanced under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, to hire eight new employees, one example of why I am sure you will hear firsthand how important that program is to the company's success. That's why we need to do all we can to extend and further enhance the 504 program and other SBA programs.

I look forward to working with you to continue building on the successes of the Recovery Act and to address the remaining challenges facing small businesses. I hope we can work together to further strengthen the ties between large and small businesses, promote federal contracting, and continue to foster the innovative spirit on display at the Norwest Aerial Robotics Cluster.

We still have a long way to go as a nation to create jobs and regain the ground we have lost in this recession, and we must redouble our efforts to give the small businesses the tools they need to create jobs and to strengthen our economy. Welcome to Washington, where, with SBA's help, our small businesses can continue to grow and innovate.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

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