March 20, 2007

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Chairman
Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6350

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter concerning the status of the Department of the Navy's Small Business Program leadership position.

In consultation with the Office of Secretary of Defense, I have begun the process to fill this policy position with a non-career senior executive. The decision to offer the position to a well qualified and experienced appointee from the private sector offers the Department a valuable and renewable source of ideas that will benefit the Small Business Program over the long term.

The Department's Small Business Program Director is a policy position, reporting directly to me or my Under Secretary. However, the day-to-day small business contracting work in the Department is carried out by career civil service Program Directors and their staffs who are located in the eleven major Navy and Marine Corps "buying commands." Each of those Directors reports to his or her own commanding officer.

I, too, want procurement decisions to be made solely to benefit our military's capability. Therefore, I have insisted that a collaborative and consultative relationship be created between the Director and our Deputy Assistant Secretary for Acquisition, an active duty admiral.

Please be assured, my intentions are to bring a quality appointee into this position. Again, I appreciate your taking the time to share your thoughts on this issue. If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Donald C. Winter

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