

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2102

January 18, 2007

The Honorable Donald C. Winter  
Secretary of the Navy  
1000 Navy Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20350-1000

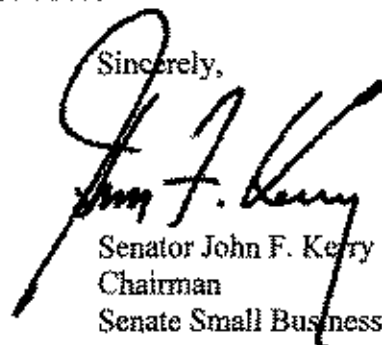
Dear Secretary Winter:

As the incoming chair of the Senate Small Business Committee, the continuity and professionalism of the procurement staff within the federal government is of the utmost importance to me. I believe, as I'm sure you do, that the staff that is charged with managing the day to day contracting and procurement process for the federal government should be as free from political influence as possible. This is especially so with respect to our armed services because procurement decisions have life and death consequences for our sailors, marines and soldiers. Those decisions also have a profound affect on our military's readiness to defend our freedoms.

With that in mind, I was very concerned to learn about the status of the leadership position responsible for the Navy Small Business Program. I am advised that the former Director, who was a career member of the Senior Executive Service (SES), was removed and retired in 2005. Subsequently, the Navy downgraded the job to a GS-1102-15 and announced it as such. Apparently the job was not filled as a GS-1102-15, and I understand that the Navy is contemplating converting what was originally a career SES civilian job, to a political position. This is unacceptable. The Navy's procurement program is one of the largest opportunity markets available to small businesses in the federal government. Accordingly, for program continuity and consistency it is critical that this position remain a career SES. Please provide a written response on the status of this position to my office by no later than January 30, 2007.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation on this important issue. If you have questions about this matter, please feel free to contact me, or have your staff contact Gregory Willis at (202) 224-5175.

Sincerely,



Senator John F. Kerry  
Chairman  
Senate Small Business & Entrepreneurship Committee

Cc: Secretary of Defense Robert Gates