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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6350

February 26, 2004

VIA FACSIMILE & FIRST-CLASS MAIL

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

Re: SBIR Rural Outreach and FAST

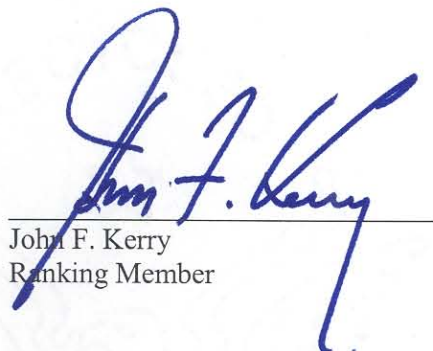
Dear Administrator Barreto:

First, we are writing to express our concerns that the Administration has proposed eliminating the Federal and State Technology (FAST) and the Rural Outreach (ROP) programs in fiscal year 2005. These programs are critical to the cultivation of technology and high-tech small businesses through increased participation in the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs in rural and underutilized states. In the past, firms located in a relatively small number of states have been more successful in securing SBIR and STTR awards, but the FAST and ROP programs have helped small businesses in every part of the country compete effectively for SBIR and STTR projects. These awards not only provide R&D dollars to small high-tech firms, but they encourage technological advancement, improve overall productivity, increase economic growth and create jobs. Eliminating these important initiatives is unwarranted and unwise.

Second, we are writing to inquire about the status of the fiscal year 2004 requests for proposals (RFPs), which have yet to be sent out by the SBA for the ROP and FAST programs. Any further delay could severely impede the ability of the programs' resource partners to reach out to rural America and help small R&D firms across the country to participate in the SBIR and STTR programs.

Please provide us, by noon Friday, March 5, 2004, the current status of these SBIR Rural Outreach and FAST Partnership RFPs, as well as anticipated publication and award dates. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Marc Comer of Senator Kerry's Small Business & Entrepreneurship Committee staff at (202) 224-8496.

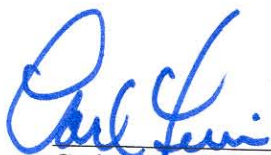
Sincerely,



John F. Kerry
Ranking Member



Conrad Burns




Carl Levin



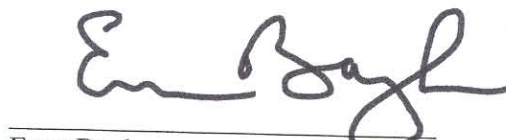
Tom Harkin




Mary L. Landrieu



Maria Cantwell



Evan Bayh



Mark Pryor