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United States Senate

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

June 1, 2005

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

Re: National Women's Business Council Membership

Dear Administrator Barreto:

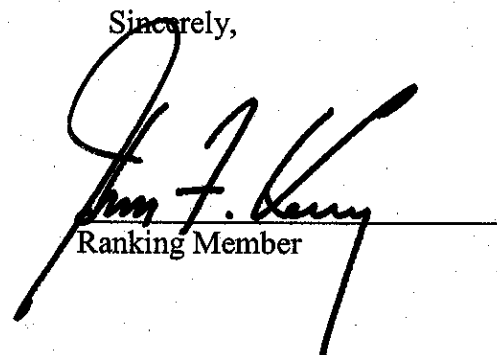
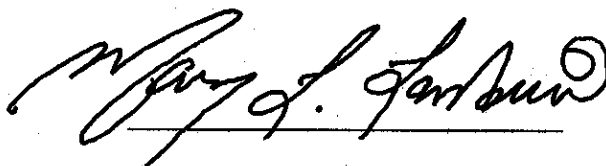
We are writing about a Democratic seat on the National Women's Business Council that has remained vacant for more than four years. It is our deep concern that this long-term vacancy and lack of full representation are undermining the Council's bipartisan mission.

As you know, the National Women's Business Council was designed to be a bipartisan federal advisory council created to serve as an independent source of advice and policy recommendations to the White House, Congress, and the SBA on economic issues of importance to women business owners. The Council consists of 15 individuals: the Chair; eight individual members, four of the President's party and four not of the President's party; and six representatives of women's business organizations.

Vacancies on the 15-member Council are supposed to be filled no later than 30 days after a seat becomes open. However, over the past four and a half years, the SBA has routinely failed to meet this 30-day statutory deadline. The Council Chair was vacant from May 29, 2001, to May 21, 2002, a period of 11 months and 22 days. As a result, the Council was unable to meet for nearly a year. Of the party-affiliated seats reserved for the President's party, one seat was vacant for three months, two were vacant for a period of seven months, and another went vacant for 21 months. Of the seats reserved for Democrats, one was vacant for seven months, two remained vacant for nearly two years, and the fourth seat remains vacant today.

With women-owned businesses growing at twice the rate of all other firms, the Council's guidance and bipartisanship have become increasingly more important. To ensure that the Council is able to fulfill its mission we urge you to fill the vacant position as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Ranking Member

J. Lujan

Tom Hark

Maria C. Lopez

Max Poyar

Carl Levin

Erin Boyle