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# United States Senate

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

September 23, 2005

WESTON J. COULAM, REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR  
PATRICIA R. FORBES, DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR AND CHIEF COUNSEL

The Honorable Hector V. Barreto  
Administrator  
U.S. Small Business Administration  
409 3rd Street S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20416

Dear Administrator Barreto:

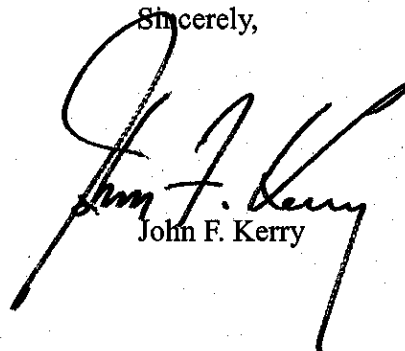
On July 29, 2005, you responded to my request for the SBA to implement the Woman-Owned Small Business Set-Aside Program. In that letter, you stated, "The SBA's Office of Federal Contract Assistance for Women Business Owners (CAWBO) is working closely with our Office of General Counsel (OGC) to finalize and issue a Statement of Work to perform a revised study to identify the industries in which women-owned small businesses are underrepresented and substantially underrepresented in Federal procurement. The target date for release of the Request for Proposals (RFP) for this study is July 30, 2005."

To date, no RFP has been released. The proposed regulations for implementing the program are now well overdue, even according to your own timeline. Since you responded, the SBA has released its FY2004 Small Business Goaling Report, which showed that the Administration has again failed to meet the 5 percent contracting goal for women-owned businesses. With a 3.02 percent achievement for women's businesses, the Administration is over \$7 billion short of its government-wide goal for these firms. The SBA has consistently failed to implement the women's business set-aside and continues to fall short of its contracting goal -- preventing women-owned business from getting their share of Federal contracts.

I am disappointed that the implementation of this much-needed program continues to be delayed. This raises serious questions about the SBA's commitment to this nation's women business owners. Particularly in this time of national disaster response, agencies need procurement tools that will help them rapidly meet the needs of those in emergency recovery areas while creating business opportunities for the small firms affected by natural disasters. The women's business set-aside is an important tool that could help to serve those purposes.

I strongly urge you to immediately release the RFP and proposed regulations to implement the Women-Owned Small Business Set-Aside Program. Thank you for your consideration of this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



John F. Kerry