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United States Senate

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

October 25, 2005

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

Re: Closure of One of Miami's Temporary Loan Assistance Centers

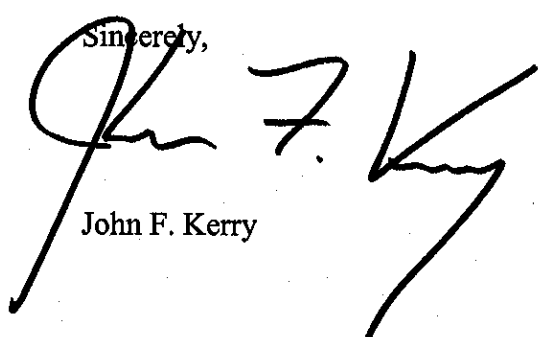
Dear Mr. Administrator:

On October 19, the Small Business Administration (SBA) closed one of its temporary loan assistance centers in Miami, the location at 1490 N. W. 3rd Avenue. At the same time, weather reports were warning citizens in Miami and the south coast of Florida about the threat of Hurricane Wilma. Not only is Wilma the eighth hurricane to strike Florida in about 14 months, but just yesterday forecasters predicted that, "Wilma could prove to be the strongest storm in Miami since Hurricane Andrew caused more than \$25 billion in damage in August 1992." Given the history of hurricanes in the state, the forecasts, and the chronic problems of the SBA in meeting the disaster loan needs of Katrina and Rita victims, it is unclear why the SBA would give up this location and its staff until it was sure the area would not need the backup support for those small businesses and homes damaged in the area and any evacuees who end up stranded there.

I urge the SBA to quickly assess the needs of Florida residents to make sure the Agency is prepared to efficiently help small businesses and homeowners fill out applications and to verify damage and process loans. Please send me an explanation by close of business Tuesday, November 1, 2005, describing what factors went into the decision to close the center, why the SBA didn't reconsider given the forecasts, and how the SBA will meet the needs of Florida residents in the aftermath of Wilma.

Please have your staff fax the response to the attention of Ms. Kevin Wheeler at 202-228-1814. I thank you for your attention to this matter. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,


John F. Kerry