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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6350

May 26, 2006

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

Dear Administrator Barreto:

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita destroyed or damaged thousands of businesses throughout the Gulf region, and countless business owners have been displaced. In Louisiana alone, over 18,000 businesses were catastrophically destroyed and 365,200 residents were displaced by the storms. Many of these damaged or interrupted businesses have slowly begun rebuilding their operations in the nine months since the storms, but others have yet to return to the region or to resume operations. We are both concerned that as the May 29, 2006 application deadline for Small Business Administration Economic Injury Disaster Loans approaches, many business owners have yet to apply for this vital assistance.

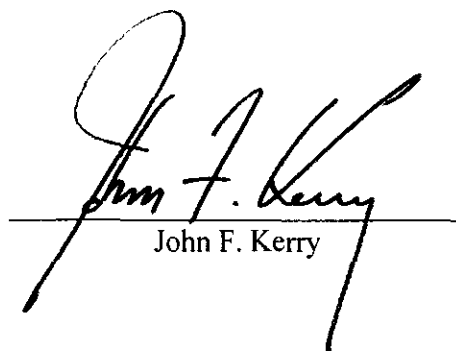
As you know, on May 5, 2006 we had the opportunity to tour some of the hardest hit areas of New Orleans and to meet with affected business owners. Following this tour, we participated in the Louisiana "Back to Business" roundtable with affected businesses, state and local officials, and business groups. We learned many things from these businesses, but one issue came up again and again: Many businesses are still struggling to find the resources necessary to re-open and remain open. We are concerned that, lacking access to needed capital, many of these businesses will face a difficult future unless there is a significant change in conditions on the ground. We will continue our efforts to assist businesses in the region. However, for those businesses that were interrupted or negatively impacted by Katrina, we urge you to extend the deadline of May 29<sup>th</sup> for applications for Economic Injury Disaster Loans from victims of Hurricane Katrina.

A one month extension of this deadline would allow affected businesses the additional time that they need to return to their communities, assess their damages, and apply for assistance. We hope that you will extend this deadline immediately so that the small businesses affected by Hurricane Katrina are still eligible to apply for economic injury disaster loans from the SBA to help their businesses recover from this devastating storm.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this request.

Sincerely,

  
Mary L. Landrieu

  
John F. Kerry