



Remarks Prepared for Delivery by

The Honorable Sandy K. Baruah
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at the

Philadelphia E-200 Graduation Ceremony

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Introduction

Thank you, Stephanie [Watkins, SBA Regional Administrator], for that very nice introduction and for your strong leadership at SBA and for your service to our country.

I also would like to acknowledge the SBA District Director Dave Dickson and his talented staff, and my thanks to Kevin Dow, the mayor's representative, for joining us today.

It is a pleasure to be back in one of America's greatest and most historic cities, Philadelphia, and I am proud to join you in a celebration of this important milestone: the graduation of a select group of small business owners and entrepreneurs, the first class of Emerging 200, our flagship initiative to access the tremendous talent and spirit of the inner city.

Let me begin with the most important; my sincere congratulations to the pioneering graduates of the E-200 program and applaud you in your accomplishment. Today is deservedly all about you. Small business is the life blood of our economy – and is especially more so during challenging economic times as we are in today.

As graduates of the E-200 program, you are now part of the SBA family – SBA alumni if you will. But unlike family, you will not have to endure awkward family reunions with matching t-shirts, nor as alumni will we continually ping you for contributions to the endowment – unless of course the Federal budget gets any worse.

But as graduates and the newest members of the SBA family, we take pride in your success, want to continue to help you succeed, want to keep in touch with you, and of course, look forward to working together to advance the cause of entrepreneurship and economic growth in America’s urban cities . . . a goal I know is shared by the Mayor.

If he were here today, President Bush would be most encouraged by your achievement, as he believes in the promise of entrepreneurship, and sees small business ownership as the gateway to greater opportunity for *all* Americans, especially those in the inner city. As he has said on more than one occasion:

“Small business ownership is a great equalizer in America. The only connections you need are happy customers, [and] a good business plan. The only credentials you need are good products. The only values you need [are] to be willing to take risks and to work hard.”

That describes all of you in this room and I applaud your personal commitment to advancing economic prosperity in the neighborhoods of Philadelphia and your role in making the American dream a reality for more Americans.

The E-200 Vision

As the *New York Times*' Tom Friedman is fond of saying, the world in the 21st Century is *flat*. One of the things I stress as I travel across the country is that America's businesses from the very large to the very small, must realize that we live in a worldwide marketplace, where competition today is not necessarily the firm next door or the firm in the next city. Our competition today comes from any person, on any point on this globe with a good idea, a good education, and a good internet connection. For some that statement conjures up someone living in a foreign land. For me, that makes me think of America's inner cities that have often been overlooked in our efforts to maintain and build American competitiveness

This is why SBA has teamed up with Harvard's Michael Porter and his Initiative for a Competitive Inner City to help design, launch, implement, and expand E-200. E-200 itself was inspired by Professor Porter's vision, shared by SBA, that the inner cities are untapped veins of entrepreneurship. E-200, which is really a mini-MBA program,

has trained not just the 20 entrepreneurs we honor here today in Philadelphia, but another 180 promising business owners in nine other cities across America.

The SBA E-200 program has been so successful and promising that we just announced the addition of 5 new cities in the E-200 program and I will be in Detroit, Michigan, next week to kick-off this new round of E-200 cities; my last official act as the head of the SBA.

You and your E-200 counterparts across the country engaged in an intensive curriculum that focused on developing a winning strategy for your business. You worked with mentors, attended workshops, and networked with leaders in the business and financial community.

Through E-200, we invested in you so that you can invest in others. When you succeed, your employees succeed, your customers succeed, and the economy of the City of Brotherly Love succeeds. By creating jobs and wealth, successful small businesses like yours not only become the economic backbone of communities but they also open the American Dream for many who previously found that door shut.

As I look around this room, I see men and women who represent the creative force of entrepreneurship that fuels much of America's greatness. You are among the 25 million small businesses that drive innovation and keep our economy robust, adaptable, and competitive. You represent a powerful force for good that transforms the game for citizens who live in communities where opportunity is in short supply.

The President's Accomplishments

For those of us leaving office with President Bush in just a few days, it is understandably a wistful time for us. Under normal circumstances people in my position would be tempted to reflect on our accomplishments over the past 8 years – and make no mistake, I am exceptionally proud to have served this President and I am proud to stand by his record of accomplishment.

However, we are not in a normal period of time. We face significant economic challenges. So I'll limit my retrospective comments to just a few words.

Regardless of the public opinion poll of the day, let's remember that this is a man who kept us safe—something no one thought was possible on September 12th, 2001. While our enemies wanted to take the fight to us—to fight us on our soil—President Bush successfully took the fight to them, overseas. Today, across the world there are

more countries and more people free today than at any other time in the history of our planet.

The President's worldview and understanding of the competitive global economy resulted in an unprecedented expansion of free trade agreements—from 3 FTAs when he came to office to 14 today. A little known fact about these free trade agreements . . . we have a combined *trade surplus* with the countries where there are FTAs in place.

When the President took office, he inherited a recession, which was followed by the terror attacks of September 11th. Despite this rather difficult hand that he was dealt, his policies created the longest job expansion in U.S. history—52 straight months—one of the longest periods of GDP growth on record.

The President's tax cuts removed more than 6 million low-income Americans from the tax rolls completely, lowered taxes on all income classes, and still, revenues to the Treasury grew more than 30% in the past 3 years.

President Bush was willing to focus on things that were important to governing, but didn't necessarily garner headlines. He was the first President to focus on basic management discipline. His management agenda directed government agencies like

SBA to measure success by quantifiable outcomes, not by the amount of taxpayer dollars spent.

For example, SBA managed to save about \$120 million *annually* by making SBA loan programs self-funding. This was not only good news for the taxpayer by saving more than \$100 million per year, the new system resulted in a record number of loans made to U.S. small businesses, of which more than a third are located in underserved markets. In fact, even in 2008, when we faced the credit crunch and strong economic headwinds, SBA made more loans than even the *best* year under any previous Administration.

SBA saved even more taxpayer dollars by consolidating loan processing centers; going from more than 50 decentralized sites to 6 centralized processing centers not only saved money, it also improved our turn-around times and established national standards for loan processing not attainable under the previous, disjointed system.

Above all, George W. Bush promised to uphold the honor and the dignity of the Oval Office. That is a charge that our President has kept, and I can personally attest to the dignity in which he has executed his responsibilities and the high standards of conduct he expected from himself and those who served him.

Closing

I could go on, but that discussing the President's record – one that I am proud of – is best left to another time and another venue. Today, our nation is focused on this time of economic challenge and transition of power to a new Administration – the historic inauguration of Barack Obama, an event our entire country should take justifiable pride in.

We are reaching the tail end of the most professional, collaborative, and successful Presidential transition in American history. At SBA we are committed to this goal of a smooth transition and I am confident that my friend, Karen Mills, President-Elect Obama's selection to follow me into the SBA Administrator's role, will be able to hit the ground running.

As I prepare to turn the reigns of SBA to a new team, I offer my best wishes for *your* future success. I know that each of the graduates here today will capitalize on what you have learned from E-200 so that you can – as part of the emerging network of inner-city entrepreneurs – take your business to the next level and make an impact here in the great city of Philadelphia.

It has been my honor to serve President Bush and the American people as the Assistant Secretary and as the head of the U.S. Small Business Administration—just as it has been my pleasure to be with you today. Congratulations.