

As delivered

Ambassador Linton Brooks  
New Mexico Minority Enterprise Development Awards Celebration  
October 17, 2003

Good afternoon. It's great to be back in the Land of Enchantment to celebrate the outstanding achievements and contributions to the American economy and society made by minority businesses and those who support minority business in New Mexico.

I would like to begin by thanking Anna Muller, President of NEDA Business Consultants – a member of the MED Week Committee, for inviting the Department of Energy to participate in today's program and for all her efforts in working closely with DOE to promote minority business opportunities. I would like to recognize Theresa Alvillar-Speake, Director of the Department of Energy's Office of Small and Disadvantage Business Utilization for keeping our Department focused on the importance of minority owned businesses and the valuable role they can contribute to our labs and facilities around the nation.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Anthony J. McMahon, the Director of the U.S. Small Business Administration's New Mexico District Office, and Edith McCloud, Associate Director for Management, U. S. Department of Commerce, and Minority Business Development Agency.

We're here today to celebrate. First we celebrate small businesses, which historically have been the instruments for creating American jobs and American growth. Next we celebrate individual accomplishment by hard-working men and women. And finally, we celebrate the diversity that enriches America and that has been a part of New Mexico's heritage for centuries.

On behalf of Secretary of Energy Abraham, who is on travel in Canada today, I want to express his personal commitment and the commitment of this Administration to an agenda of free enterprise and equal opportunity so that every person in America has a chance to live the American dream of business ownership. The priority of the Bush Administration is to make it easier for individuals to start a small business, easier for small business to contract with the federal government and easier for small business to grow into a large business. When entrepreneurs prosper, our nation is stronger and our people are more likely to find work. Secretary Abraham sends his congratulations to the 2003 SBA and MBDA Award Winners!

As you are all aware, every year, the nation observes Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week, a tradition that President Reagan began some 20 years ago. MED Week, under the leadership of the SBA and U.S. Department of Commerce - MBDA, was established to recognize the contributions made by minority businesses to the Nation's economy. This year earmarks the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual National MED week celebration. Today, we celebrate New Mexico's Minority

Enterprise Development Day and I am pleased to be here in your beautiful state to help you honor and recognize your awardees.

Last month, at the National MED week luncheon, the Vice President of the United States, Dick Cheney was the luncheon keynote presenter. I would like to echo some of the comments he made at that time. First, he said that this Administration is committed to minority owned businesses. At the Department of Energy, we share this commitment. He then reminded us that most minority enterprises are small businesses, the very sector that creates most of the new jobs in America, and supplies the innovation that drives our prosperity.

Minority businesses are growing at a faster pace than other businesses and providing more and more goods and services and jobs for workers. They represent the effort and the resourcefulness that makes our economy go.

Next, the Vice President said that starting and building a business is one of the most challenging and rewarding things an individual can do. All of you here today know what it means to set a goal, take a risk, assemble a team and accept responsibility. You know the satisfaction that comes with hard-earned success.

America must always be an ownership society, where hard work is rewarded and where the spirit of entrepreneurship is strong. As the economy continues to improve, though, we must not be complacent. We must continue to support small and minority business; we must focus on how to strengthen small business.

The Vice President next expressed the need for a sound, national energy policy as it relates to business development. Growing small and minority business depends on a steady, affordable, and reliable supply of energy. We need a policy that encourages the development of new sources of energy in an environmentally friendly way.

Our economy and our standard of living, which lead the world, are based on reliable supplies of energy of all kinds. And nearly every aspect of energy – discovering it, producing it, refining or generating it, and distributing it in an environmentally sound manner – relies on the development of new technologies based on scientific advances. The supply of energy relies on creativity, innovative technologies and cost effective solutions – solutions that could come from small and minority owned businesses.

We learned an important lesson during the blackout that hit the Northeast this summer: this nation needs an energy policy that will make sure our electrical grid is up to date, and that reliability standards for those who deliver electricity is mandatory, not voluntary.

As you may be aware the Department submitted an energy plan to the Congress over two years ago. It is now time for Congress to complete its work and to send the President an energy bill that he can sign into law. For the sake of national security and our economic security, America needs to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

The final point the Vice President mentioned with regard to small and minority business development was that government must reduce the burden of needless regulation on small business. Small and minority businesses work hard – they should not spend time filling out unnecessary forms and fighting the bureaucracy.

The SBA has calculated that the hidden costs of regulation amount to \$7,000 per worker, and that slows job creation in America. This administration is committed to reducing the burden of over regulation and making rules simpler to understand. Minority businesses should be focused on growing the economy and creating new jobs, not on fulfilling ineffective mandates from Washington, D.C.

By simplifying tax forms for small business owners, this Administration has saved America's entrepreneurs an estimated 61 million hours of nonproductive work. And that's a good start!

Opening up doors for small and minority business in the area of contracting is another area where making the rules simpler to understand is paying off. The Office of Management and Budget in the Office of the President has mandated that all federal agencies take action with regard to this issue.

Last year, Secretary Abraham issued his policy statement in support of small and minority business. Since that time contracting opportunities for small and minority businesses have increased significantly. To ensure that small and minority business have better access to DOE and know how to do business with DOE, we have under taken an aggressive outreach initiative. We've participated in various trade fairs and conferences. We've placed advertisements in numerous ethnic and trade publications throughout the country. We are also developing a small and minority business database targeted to the products and services DOE contracts out, enabling our program and procurement officials to consider such firms for their procurements. DOE is committed to ensuring access to its contracting opportunities for small and minority businesses.

As minority entrepreneurs, you all have shown great drive and determination. Your spirit, your hard work, and your faith in the future are making this nation stronger every day. On behalf of the Administration and all of us at the Department of Energy we wish you much success in all your business endeavors. We commend those of you who have succeeded and are being recognized today. Thank you, congratulations, and may God continue to bless America.