

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 24, 2009

The Honorable Ronald Kirk
United States Trade Representative
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Ambassador Kirk:

Congratulations on becoming our nation's new United States Trade Representative. Given these tough economic times, we need a dedicated and qualified leader for this important role, and we believe your experience and background as Mayor of Dallas - particularly your work with small businesses - make you an excellent choice to fill this position. We urge you to continue working for small businesses and to create an Assistant United States Trade Representative for Small Business. This new position would have the vital role of working to remove trade barriers for small businesses and to ensure that they have full access to foreign markets.

Less than 1 percent of our nation's small businesses, 240,000 small firms, are involved in exporting. These 240,000 enterprises comprise 97 percent of all exporting firms in our country; however, they account for just 29 percent of all U.S. exporting volume. Unfortunately this number is slightly less than it was ten years ago, indicating that exporting among small businesses is growing at a much slower rate than among large businesses. Increasing the percentage of small business exporters would drastically reduce the trade deficit and, in some years, eliminate it completely. Increasing exports among small firms is good not only for small businesses but also for the economy and our nation.

When it comes to exporting and trade, clearly more can and must be done to help our nation's small businesses. While several federal agencies - including the Small Business Administration and the Department of Commerce - have offices that advocate for small business exporters, we believe that during trade negotiations, a small business expert in the highest realms of trade policy is necessary to ensure the needs and concerns of small businesses are addressed. A high-ranking advocate for small business is vital to removing trade barriers and ensuring that small businesses are given systematic consideration in trade policy. It is for this reason that we ask you to add an Assistant U.S. Trade Representative to focus exclusively on small business trade issues.

We were pleased that your response to the Finance Committee questions indicated your understanding of the importance of small businesses in U.S. trade policy. In particular, we were pleased to see that you would give strong consideration to an Assistant United States Trade Representative for Small Business. We applaud your interest in helping small businesses and look forward to working closely with you to address their needs.

The Honorable Ronald Kirk
March 24, 2009
Page 2

Thank you for your attention to this timely matter. If you have any questions on this or other small business trade issues, please have your staff contact Karen Radermacher with Senator Landrieu's staff at (202) 224-5175, Jake Triolo with Senator Snowe's staff at (202) 224-7884, or Jeff Hamond with Senator Schumer's staff at (202) 224-6542. We wish you all the best in your new position and look forward to working with you on behalf of America's small businesses.

Sincerely,



Mary L. Landrieu
Chair
Committee on Small Business
& Entrepreneurship



Olympia J. Snowe
Ranking Member
Committee on Small Business
& Entrepreneurship



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator