



SMALL BUSINESS GROUPS PRAISE SENATOR SNOWE

FOR LEADERHIP IN SUPPORT OF SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

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Associations representing small business owners, self-employed Americans and aspiring entrepreneurs today praised Senator Olympia J. Snowe of Maine, who chairs the U.S. Senate Small Business Committee, for her support for new federal resources for small business assistance programs. The small business groups include the Association of Small Business Development Centers (ASBDC); the National Small Business Association (NSBA); the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO); and the National Association for the Self-Employed (NASE).

As the United States Senate prepared to write the Federal Budget for next year, Senator Snowe called for the Senate Budget Committee to ensure sufficient funding for small business assistance programs such as 7(a) loans and the Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs). In her letter to the Budget Committee, Senator Snowe said: "With over 6.2 million jobs created or retained over the last five years, the SBA lending and technical assistance programs have contributed greatly to small business' ability to create nearly two-thirds of the new jobs and generate about 50 percent of the nation's gross domestic product.... to ensure that small businesses continue to play a critical role in our economic recovery, adequate funding for the SBA and its programs is essential."

Approximately 67,000 small businesses that could not obtain comparable credit elsewhere were able to obtain long-term loans through the U.S. Small Business Administration's 7(a) loan program last year. The 7(a) loan program was temporarily shut down at the beginning of this year when the SBA ran out of money to fund the program, leaving small businesses across the country suddenly without access to desperately needed capital. The program was re-opened with help from Senator Snowe.

The nationwide SBDC network, which includes the 11 service centers and 25 outreach offices of the Maine SBDC, served more than 1.3 million small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs throughout the United States last year, providing no-cost to client business management assistance, as well as training, resource and information services.

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John Massaua, State Director of the Maine SBDC, said: “Senator Snowe understands that small business is the creator of new jobs and innovation, and the engine of economic recovery for Maine and our nation. Senator Snowe’s efforts to secure the necessary resources for small business assistance in Maine and throughout the nation will help break the trend of declining funding for small business assistance dating back more than six years.” According to Massaua, the Maine SBDC helped create and/or retain 530 jobs and assisted businesses in securing over 23 million dollars of capital in Maine during Calendar 2003.

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), small businesses account for 99.7% of all businesses nationwide (97.5% of all businesses in Maine); and small businesses employ 50.1% of the nation’s non-farm sector employees (60% of non-farm sector employees in Maine). Between 1999 and 2000, the SBA reports, small business added a net total of 2.5 million employees nationwide (12,422 employees in Maine), representing 75% of net non-farm employment change in the United States (73% of net non-farm employment change in Maine).

For more information about the small business associations that joined together to commend Senator Snowe, click on the web links below: www.asbdc-us.org; www.nsba.biz; www.nawbo.org; and www.nase.org.