

May 20, 2009

Bipartisan Bill Increases Opportunities for Veterans, Native Americans & Women

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, New Mexico Representatives Martin Heinrich, Ben Ray Luján and Harry Teague voted in favor of H.R. 2352, the Job Creation Through Entrepreneurship Act of 2009. The legislation will help small businesses and start-ups create jobs during this difficult economic time. The bipartisan legislation will help improve the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Program, establish business centers for veterans and women, enhance opportunities for Native American entrepreneurship, make it easier for businesses to participate in a clean energy economy and use new technology to help businesses succeed. H.R. 2352 passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 406-15.

The latest Census Bureau data shows that 98 percent of U.S. firms have less than 100 employees and that these firms both employ more than 50 percent of the private sector workforce and are responsible for creating some 97 percent of new jobs.

"At the heart of our economic recovery is the entrepreneur," said Rep. Martin Heinrich. "Entrepreneurs' creativity and innovation have the potential to create new companies in new industries. This bill gives New Mexicans the tools they need to launch these careers, and nurtures entrepreneurial and small business development. Small businesses hold neighborhoods together by providing better jobs, better opportunities, and a more vibrant community."

"Small businesses are the backbone of New Mexico's economy, and we have to make sure that they have the ability to succeed in this challenging business environment," said Rep. Luján. "This legislation will help small businesses do what they do best, create jobs and make our economy strong. I'm particularly glad that this legislation will establish business centers to assist veterans and customize grant programs to improve Native American entrepreneurial opportunities."

"As a small businessman I know that these programs are some of the smartest investments we can make in getting Southern New Mexico's economy back on track," said Congressman Harry Teague. "For every dollar we spend on a successful entrepreneurship program, we see a \$2.87 return to the Treasury. That seems like money well spent."

This critical legislation reauthorizes and modernizes the Small Business Administration's (SBA) entrepreneurial development programs so that small businesses can survive, expand and thrive. The bill would expand opportunities for veterans, Native Americans, and women by creating a new Veterans Business Center Program and Office of Native American Affairs within the SBA and expanding funding for the Women's Business Center Program. H.R. 2352 makes sure that tax dollars are spent wisely with an overhaul and modernization of the SBA's entrepreneurial development programs. Entrepreneurial development programs helped create 73,000 jobs in 2008 alone.

The following are highlights of the provisions in the Job Creation Through Entrepreneurship Act:

- **Modernizing the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Program.** Makes several key changes to the operation of the Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) program. To ensure communities are provided the services their entrepreneurs demand, local SBDCs are given a stronger voice in determining their service offerings and human resources. Taxpayers are protected by a provision that concentrates resources on entrepreneurial development, not overhead. Finally, the SBDC program is given flexibility to be more responsive during natural disasters, permitting these centers to function and contribute to recovery.
- **Establishment of Veterans Business Center Program.** Authorizes \$10 million in FY 2010 and \$12 million in FY 2011 for the SBA to expand entrepreneurial development assistance to veterans by increasing outreach facilities across the country, establishing specialized assistance programs, and updating the institutional structure designed to customize policies and programs targeted to veterans.
- **Broadening the Women's Business Centers Program.** Improves and expands business development resources for women entrepreneurs by increasing counseling and training facilities for this sector, particularly targeting underserved areas.
- **Enhancing Native American Entrepreneurship.** Ensures entrepreneurial development services are customized to Native American entrepreneurs' needs and communities by formalizing in statute the SBA's Office of Native American Affairs and establishing grants for business development outreach facilities in regions with high concentrations of these enterprises.
- **SCORE Program Improvements.** Increases the effectiveness of the SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) program by establishing new performance and benchmark requirements for the agency's business mentoring resources.

- **Helping Small Businesses Access Capital.** Creates a grant program specifically designed to assist small firms in securing capital, such as the \$21 billion in new small business lending generated under the Recovery Act.
- **Educating Entrepreneurs Through Today's Technology.** Increases access to entrepreneurial development services through the use of communication technologies to facilitate the creation of high-quality distance learning resources through public-private business development experts.
- **Boosting Entrepreneurs' Role in the Green Economy.** Establishes a green entrepreneurial development program, which will provide education, classes and one-on-one instruction in starting a business in the fields of energy efficiency, green technology, or clean technology.
- **Opening New Opportunities for Small Businesses in the Federal Marketplace.** Creates a procurement training program to help local agencies identify contracts that are suitable for local small firms and provides technical assistance regarding the federal procurement process, including helping small firms comply with federal regulations and bonding requirements.

- **Expanding Entrepreneurship.** Updates the structure of the SBA's entrepreneurial development portfolio by requiring increased coordination and planning by program operators.