



# The Election is Over, Now It's Time to Keep Those Campaign Promises

by Paul A. Miller

The 2008 Presidential election is over and we can look back on a campaign season that was historic for so many reasons. As a country we elected our first African American President and for the first time we had a woman running for the top job in the country.

Also for the first time, a Presidential candidate raised over \$750 million in campaign contributions, over three times the amount President Bush raised back in 2000.

What wasn't a first was the way the election focused its attention and resources on one key constituent in the waning weeks of the campaign: small businesses, symbolized by a new national icon, Joe the Plumber.

The campaign generated plenty of pro-small business rhetoric. But now, as our President-Elect prepares to move into his new role as President, it's time for him to go beyond all the campaign rhetoric and begin living up to his campaign promise of supporting small businesses.

Forget all the talk about cutting taxes for small businesses or providing access to affordable healthcare for small businesses. Certainly those are both critical to helping small businesses.

But if the new Administration cuts taxes it won't be just for small businesses. And if it and Congress move to provide access to healthcare it won't be just for small businesses, either.

What small business needs most today are policy initiatives that are aimed specifically at their particular needs and concerns.

If this President is serious about "Change We Can Believe In" and wants to set himself apart from other Presidents, one immediate step he can take to show his support for small businesses by elevating the head of the Small Business Administration (SBA) to a Cabinet-level post.

If the small business community is to have any chance of gaining the clout it needs in Washington it needs an agency that has the money, resources, and power to make things happen.

In Congress, Rep. Nydia Velaquez put her money where her mouth was when she took over the House Small Business Committee. She was able to get her leadership to approve new authority for the Committee and make it relevant again.

Elevating the SBA Administrator post to Cabinet level is not a new concept. Former President Bill Clinton included his SBA Administrator in Cabinet level meetings. That was a good start, but our new President has to go farther and officially elevate this post to Cabinet level. Until this happens the SBA will continue to struggle.

Since 2000 the SBA has had its budget cut by 26%. Our leaders all talk about how important small businesses are to the economy, but none of them has really done anything to show their support for this group.

It's not the small business community who is seeking billions of dollars in bailout money. It's not small businesses who are defrauding the tax-payer. And, it's not the small business community who is going bankrupt.

It is however small businesses who are finding ways to stay profitable and keep their employees working during this difficult time and they need our government's support!

I applaud NOPA for its willingness to begin rallying small businesses on behalf of such a move. The association has already sent a letter to President-Elect Obama requesting that as one of his first steps as President, he officially make the SBA post a Cabinet Post.

Until this move is made, the small business community will continue to be little more than a step child in Washington.

Every politician coozies up to small businesses when they need their votes, but when push comes to shove, they have done next to nothing to help them.

Now is the time to change all that. Mr. President-Elect, small businesses put their faith in you. It's our hope you will put your faith in them and support them in becoming a key partner in your new Administration.

We urge you to elevate the SBA Administrator to a Cabinet level post. We also urge you to appoint someone to this post who truly understands the needs of small businesses. This position can no longer be treated as a third-tier prize for a campaign supporter. It needs real small business leadership from a small business owner, not a bureaucrat or fat cat.

Now is the time to back up the campaign pledge with real action. We are counting on you!



Paul Miller is a founding partner in Miller/Wenhold Capitol Strategies, LLC, providers of direct and grassroots lobbying, legislative and regulatory tracking, advocacy planning and implementation and related services. Before setting up Miller/Wenhold, Miller served as government affairs director for the National Office Products Alliance and the Office Furniture Dealers Alliance (NOPA/OFDA). In addition to his lobbying and regulatory monitoring activities, Paul also provides consulting services to businesses on selling to the federal, state and local government markets. For more information, visit [www.mwcapitol.com](http://www.mwcapitol.com).

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