



FEATURE
paul Miller
government sales

Senators Kerry and Snowe Request Halt to Elimination of Small Business Opportunities

By Paul A. Miller

Back in May I reported that we were working with small businesses to stop the General Services Administration (GSA) from outsourcing office supplies from the GSA Global Supply Program. After eight months of hard work, I am pleased to report that Senators John Kerry (D-MA) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, have stepped in yet again to halt any effort to outsource these products and eliminate small business opportunities.

Senators Kerry and Snowe sent GSA a letter requesting the agency halt any efforts to issue an RFP for these products until the General Accountability Office (GAO) has conducted a thorough review of the Global Supply Program and its impacts on small business and the readiness capabilities of the federal government.

Before the Senators' intervention, GSA was moving towards a plan to take office products out of the Global Supply Program and transfer them to a contract currently held by a large corporate company.

If this were to happen it would mean tens of millions of dollars in lost revenue for the small business community. In fact, we are concerned that such efforts would be done with little focus on providing new opportunities for this busi-

ness for small businesses.

"Eliminating contracts that small businesses successfully competed to win, without a full understanding of the negative impacts, is unacceptable," said Senator Kerry.

"It is crucial that we fully understand how the GSA's removal of office supplies from the Stock Program will impact small businesses," said Senator Snowe. "Currently, 80 percent of the Stock Program's office supply procurements are directed to small businesses suppliers. I am concerned that the elimination of these contracts could have a detrimental impact on our nation's small enterprises. Every avenue must be explored to ensure that small businesses are not faced with further barriers in accessing government contracts."

Senators Kerry and Snowe also asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to review the consequences given that the Stock Program's office products create a vital and readily accessible resource to all government agencies for their various supply needs in times of emergency.

Senators Kerry and Snowe should be applauded for their hard work on this issue. Both members stood together and worked in a bipartisan way to ensure that small businesses currently supplying to the GSA Global Supply

Program wouldn't be unfairly harmed by this action. We still have to wait and see what the GAO report says, but we are confident that it will come back with a report that's positive for small business.

The Global Supply Program is an important one for the federal government and its readiness capabilities. Any attempts to alter that ability without thoroughly studying the impacts that eliminating such a program would have on small business and on the government's ability to get the goods it needs during a crisis situation is not good for anyone.

Our message is a simple one: Before eliminating any products from this program, let's take a closer look at the impacts any move would have to ensure that it is in the best interest of the government and the people it serves.

To that end, we will continue to work with the GAO and Senators Kerry and Snowe, two true small business advocates, to help provide information supporting the need to maintain the current Global Supply Program and its support of small business.

Following is the text of the letter Senators Kerry and Snowe sent to the GSA:

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Ms. Lurita Doan
GSA Administrator
U.S. General Services Administration
1800 F Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20405-0002

Dear Administrator Doan:

It has been brought to our attention that the General Services Administration (GSA) has not adequately addressed the concerns we raised in our letter of July 6, 2007 and is still actively working to eliminate office supplies from the Stock Program. We were especially disappointed to learn that GSA plans to issue a new solicitation in the next few weeks to outsource these products to a private vendor.

Before GSA moves forward, we request that a temporary halt be placed on this effort until Congress has had a chance to review this issue in greater detail. We're concerned that outsourcing these office supplies will have a devastating effect on the small businesses currently supplying these products. We are also alarmed about the impact the elimination of the Stock Program will have on our Nation's emergency readiness capabilities. Having office supplies readily available is important to our ability to react quickly to disasters. Before GSA eliminates any items from the Stock Program, we would like to fully understand all the consequences of this action.

We are also requesting that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) perform a study of this issue and report back to us as quickly as possible on their findings. We have reviewed past GAO reports on office supplies and the Stock Program but believe that a current GAO review is needed before GSA takes any further steps to terminate the program. We request that you take no further action toward eliminating office supplies or any other items from the Stock Program until we have had adequate time to review the GAO's findings.

Thank you for your cooperation with this request. We look forward to working with you to strengthen the Stock Program and give our small businesses a level playing field in the federal procurement arena.

Sincerely,

John F. Kerry
Chairman

Olympia J. Snowe
Ranking Member

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.