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August 3, 2009

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CARDIN, LANDRIEU, SNOWE, SHAHEEN PUSH FOR MORE EFFECTIVE TRADE POLICIES TO HELP SMALL FIRMS

Request GAO to study agencies' coordination to promote trade.

WASHINGTON – **U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)**, along with U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship Chair Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Ranking Member Olympia J. Snowe (R-ME), and fellow Small Business Committee member Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), today wrote to Gene Dodaro, Acting Comptroller General of the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), asking for a study on the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee's (TPCC) progress in implementing an effective government-wide strategy to promote exporting for small businesses.

“As the new Administration gets underway, it is crucial that all TPCC member agencies, particularly those involved in promoting or providing services and opportunities to small businesses, are on the same page,” the senators said.

Currently, the 19 agencies involved in trade promotion are not successfully coordinating their programs despite signs of some improvement over the years, the senators said. This lack of harmonization has caused small businesses to suffer. Lending through a key Small Business Administration trade assistance loan program has dropped by more than 63 percent since 2003, and the number of financial specialists located in U.S. Export Assistance centers throughout the country has also been slashed.

If the TPCC took a greater role in coordinating trade programs across the federal government, small businesses would have more access to exporting opportunities, creating jobs and making America more competitive. Every \$1 billion of exports creates more than 14,000 high-paying American jobs. Yet, less than one percent of all U.S. small businesses export, despite the fact that more than 95 percent of the world's customers live outside our borders.

Specifically, the senators asked the GAO to look into:

- Steps being taken to improve interagency coordination, training and outreach to small businesses;
- The allocation of SBA resources to export promotion efforts as compared to other TPCC member agencies that serve small businesses;

- The National Export Strategy in relation to small business export promotion; and
- The Department of Commerce's management and control of the TPCC's activities and whether its control impacts the effectiveness of trade promotion within other agencies.

The letter sent today can be found here: <http://sbc.senate.gov/oversight/lettersout/2009/09%2008%2003-ltr-toGAO-reTPCCSmallBizReport.pdf>.

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