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CONGRESSIONAL DEMOCRATS CELEBRATE SMALL BUSINESS WEEK WITH SMALL BUSINESS LEADERS

Washington, DC – Today Congressional Democrats celebrated National Small Business Week with Asian and Pacific Islander American small business leaders from across the country.

“Skyrocketing energy and fuel costs have hit small businesses disproportionately hard. For this country to grow its way out of our current economic crisis, we need a targeted plan to help small businesses – especially those who are dependent on fuel – survive these tough times. Small businesses have historically lifted our economy out of hard economic times, but we need to provide the tools that allow them to concentrate on innovation and growth,” said, **Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)**, a member of the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee.

Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) said, “In Nevada, small businesses are the backbone of our local economy. In our cities and towns these companies provide employment, important services and foster innovation. In fact, all across America companies like these are responsible for creating most of the new jobs. It is important to realize that as we celebrate National Small Business Week. It is also imperative that we focus on the issues before Congress that will help these companies to grow and continue to drive America’s economic engine. Tough economic times are upon us but small businesses can help lead the way out.”

Small businesses currently employ half of all private sector employees, and have generated more than 60 percent of net new jobs annually over the last decade. Despite this strength, small businesses and the Small Business Administration have not been a priority for the Bush Administration. The Administration has consistently worked to increase the cost of small business loans, cut funding for core small business counseling and entrepreneurial development programs, and failed to enforce small business contracting goals, especially for minorities, women and veterans.

Congressman Mike Honda (D-CA) said, “Small business owners in the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities face unique challenges in accessing capital, government contracts and business counseling, particularly with language and cultural barriers. To the country as a whole, this is critical, especially during times of economic uncertainty, as small businesses create the bulk of our economy’s new jobs. I am very hopeful that today’s forum represents the beginning of an ongoing dialogue between

Congress and Asian and Pacific Islander small business leaders. I would like to thank Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Reid, Senators Kerry, and Cardin, and Democratic Leadership for their continued commitment to this growing and diverse community. I'm sure all the ideas and concerns we heard today will help us shape sound policies that will not only benefit this community, but all Americans.”

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