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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-5401

COMMITTEES:
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NATURAL RESOURCES

April 14, 2010

The Honorable Karen G. Mills
Administrator
U.S. Small Business Administration
409 3rd Street, SW
Washington, DC 20416

Dear Administrator Mills:

I write to respectfully request that the Small Business Administration (SBA) assign a procurement center representative for the region of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In 2009, entities in Puerto Rico received only 0.2% of the \$524 billion awarded in contracts by the federal government. Based on this alarming statistic, it stands to reason that Puerto Rico in general—and its small businesses in particular—could benefit from additional guidance and direction related to the federal procurement process. I believe assigning a procurement center representative to Puerto Rico and the USVI would ensure that these jurisdictions can compete effectively for federal procurement contracts.

As you know, procurement center representatives serve as counselors for small businesses and advocate for these firms during the procurement process. They have the power to reserve contracts for certain small businesses, and can provide local-market information to federal entities seeking to contract in the region. Puerto Rico's current procurement center representative is assigned to Area I, and covers New Jersey in addition to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The current representative is located in New Jersey, and I have received various reports about his lack of contact with both Puerto Rico's SBA office and the Puerto Rico Industrial Development Corporation. This is evidenced by the absence of Puerto Rico- or USVI-specific industries listed on the SBA website under the representative's assigned activities. Increased attention from the SBA, in the form of a new procurement center representative responsible solely for Puerto Rico and the USVI, would help guide Puerto Rico and USVI small businesses through the procurement process and facilitate these entities' response to federal procurement opportunities. This, in turn, would help spur production and reduce unemployment in Puerto Rico, which currently stands at 16%.

It is clear that additional work is needed within the Small Business Administration in order to guide small businesses through the process of federal procurement. I appreciate your attention to this matter, and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pedro R. Pierluisi", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Pedro R. Pierluisi
Member of Congress

cc: Ms. Janette Fasano, Area Director, SBA Area I