

THE SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCATE

United States
Small Business
Administration

Office of Advocacy

February 1997

Vol. 16, No. 2

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Aida Alvarez Confirmed as SBA Administrator

The U.S. Senate voted unanimously on Feb. 13, 1997, to confirm Aida Alvarez as administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration. President Clinton has designated the SBA administrator a member of both the Cabinet and the White House economic policymaking team—making Alvarez the first Hispanic woman and the first person of Puerto Rican heritage to hold a position in the President's Cabinet.

During her confirmation hearing, Alvarez told the Senate Small Business Committee that she wanted the SBA to "be on the leading edge in financial management, particularly

as it expands its reliance on private-sector partners." Alvarez also pledged to be a strong advocate for small business, "an effective voice within the Administration, and a champion for the SBA's mission."

Alvarez comes to the SBA after leading the government's first effort to regulate the nation's two largest housing finance companies, the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) and the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac). As director of the Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight (OFHEO), she created a financial safety and sound-

Continued on page 3

Research and Publications

New Report Shows Growth in Bank Lending to Small Firms

Bank lending to small businesses increased by 5 percent, or \$8.4 billion, in 1996 for the second straight year, according to a study released by the Office of Advocacy. The study, the 1996 edition of *Small Business Lending in the United States*, is the Office of Advocacy's third report focusing on the small business lending activities of the nation's commercial bank lenders. The report is a comprehensive state-by-state ranking of all 9,670 U.S. banks required to provide "call report" data to federal bank regulators in 1996. Banks are listed in order of their "small business friendliness" — defined in the study as making loans of less than

\$250,000. Commercial banks had \$172 billion outstanding in small loans as of mid-1996.

A companion study, the *Bank Holding Company Study*, released at the end of January by the Office of Advocacy, indicates that large bank holding companies with more than \$1 billion in business loans under \$250,000 increased their small business lending by 24 percent between 1995 and 1996. Most of the increase is attributable to bank mergers and acquisitions. These larger banks account for 28 percent of small business lending by all banks in the United States.

At first place on the Office of
Continued on page 8

Chief Counsel's "In Box"

Q: *The Office of Advocacy receives letters from small business owners concerning all kinds of regulatory matters—environmental issues, taxation, unfair competition, the ADA, work place safety, etc. Recently, the office received a few letters with similar concerns regarding paperwork burdens. The authors complained that despite progress in achieving paperwork reduction, there were still too many forms and too many questions on the forms that they were supposed to answer. Some writers even sent along copies of paperwork they had been required to deal with. The following answer has been selected from the several individual responses issued by this office.*

A: Your letter and enclosures provide graphic examples of the paperwork burden small businesses must bear to satisfy various reporting requirements. Congress and the Administration are aware of this problem and each have taken steps to reduce the paperwork burden on small business.

The Paperwork Reduction Act was amended in 1995 and established goals for agencies to reduce reporting and other paperwork requirements. The Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act, signed into law last year, made IRS regulations that impose information collection requirements on small business subject to the Regulatory Flexibility Act. That law requires agencies to evaluate the impact of proposed regulations on small business, consider alternatives, and choose less burdensome alternatives when possible.

Also, in 1995, the President directed federal executive branch agencies to reduce by 50 percent their reporting requirements, when legally permissible.

As for state mandated reports, a priority project for the Office of Ad-

This month:

A look at the paperwork burdens imposed on small business



vocacy this year is pursuing paperwork reforms at the state level. We also have been working on a longer-term project that would simplify tax reporting to the states and to the federal government.

Having said all of this, I nevertheless have to defend data collection by the Bureau of the Census. Data on the activities, structure, changes, etc. in the small business sector of the economy are essential to the development of public policy. For example, how would the government know the impact of a regulation on small business unless it had access to a profile of the industry? Such data arm small business with information to evaluate the relative benefits or burdens of legislative and regulatory proposals. Statistically valid data, as contrasted with anecdotal data, are essential if decisions on public policy issues are to be informed and reasonably designed to solve problems and/or to level the playing field for small business.

Each year, the SBA publishes

The State of Small Business: A Report of the President. This is a report mandated by Congress and is a compilation of data describing small business' contributions to the economy. The data on which the SBA relies for this report are compiled by the Bureau of the Census and other federal agencies, such as the Federal Reserve. From this data we can develop projections on the capital needs of small business, where innovations are occurring in the small business sector of the economy, the number of jobs being generated, etc. The result is a very valuable resource document; the data substantiate and point to economic issues and trends that congressional and executive agencies should consider to ensure a level playing field for small business.

An equitable balance between information needed for sound public policy and unreasonable costs to small business is our objective. Some legislative changes may have to be made by Congress to achieve those goals and we will work on these objectives together. Your input is invaluable to these efforts, and you are encouraged to stay involved in this issue.

Do You Have a Question?

Do you have a question for the Chief Counsel? Address letters to: "In Box," Chief Counsel for Advocacy, U.S. Small Business Administration, Mail Code 3114, 409 Third St., S.W., Washington, DC 20416.

For immediate access, call SBA On-Line at 1-800-697-4636 (9600 baud); in Washington, D.C., call (202) 401-9600.

The Small Business Advocate

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The Small Business Advocate (ISSN 1045-7658) is published monthly by the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy and is distributed to Small Business Administration field staff and members of the U.S. Congress. *The Small Business Advocate* is available without charge from the Office of Advocacy, U.S. Small Business Administration, Mail Code 3114, Washington, DC 20416. Back issues are available on microfiche from the National Technical Information Service, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22161.

Send address changes to The Small Business Advocate, Mail Code 3114, U.S. Small Business Administration, Washington, DC 20416. Include your current address label.

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Administrator, from page 1

ness oversight program to cover Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the two government-chartered corporations whose operations form the core of the trillion-dollar secondary mortgage market.

Prior to directing OFHEO, Alvarez worked as an investment banker for the Wall Street firms of Bear Stearns and First Boston Corp. Alvarez also is a distinguished journalist and has won awards for her work as a reporter for *The New York Post* and for Metromedia Television (Channel 5) in New York.

Alvarez also served two years as a vice president at the New York City Health and Hospitals Corp., the nation's largest municipal health care system. She is a native of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, and a *cum laude* graduate of Harvard College.

The new administrator's first opportunity to address the Senate Committee on Small Business came on Feb. 26, when Alvarez discussed the agency's budget request for fiscal year 1998. In her statement, Administrator Alvarez asserted that the SBA "stands poised to shift many of its traditional loan-related activities to the private sector and to continue centralizing some of its loan servicing and processing functions. . . . Through its 44-year history, there have been many significant achievements by this agency. SBA now manages a \$42 billion loan portfolio and it has improved the lives of millions of Americans, by helping them to start, run, and succeed with their own small businesses. I hope to add to this list of achievements by providing leadership for SBA in an important time of transition. I look forward to working closely with this committee to improve the way our government serves small business."

Administrator Alvarez also stated that she will follow closely the progress of the newly created ombudsman's office and Regulatory Fairness Boards. "These boards," said Alvarez, "together with the Office of Advocacy, should protect the interests of the



New SBA Administrator Aida Alvarez, confirmed by the Senate on Feb. 13, 1997.

small business community from regulatory missteps."

Chief Counsel for Advocacy Jere W. Glover said, "Aida Alvarez brings to the SBA both an exceptionally strong background in financial management and a deep sensitivity to the concerns of small, women-owned, and minority-owned businesses. We are fortunate to have her leadership as we work to improve the economic environment of America's growing small business community."

Entrepreneurial Research Consortium Issues Results of First Pilot Study

One of every three U.S. households—37 percent, or 35 million households—includes someone who has had a primary role in a new or small business, according to a first-of-its-kind study by an international research consortium that includes SBA's Office of Advocacy. The Entrepreneurial Research Consortium (ERC), comprising more than two dozen college and university foundations and government units, combined research skills and funds to implement the collaborative project in the United States.

"This is the first thorough assessment of business start-ups in a market economy," said Chief Counsel for Advocacy Jere W. Glover. "The findings clearly demonstrate that new and small businesses are a far more integral part of American life than we ever have realized."

Among other things, the ERC study found widespread business activity among American households. The findings of the ERC study include:

- In 15 percent of American

A consortium involving more than 90 researchers has just issued a report on business activity in U.S. households.

households (or about 14 million households), one or more persons had discontinued a start-up in his or her lifetime.

- In 37 percent (or more than one in every three households), someone has had a primary role in a new business activity.
- Nascent entrepreneurs reported start-up activity in 21 economic sectors, ranging from agriculture to banking and insurance, from eating and drinking to health and social services.
- A predominant 76 percent of start-ups are independent start-ups, created by individuals working on their own. The rest of them are

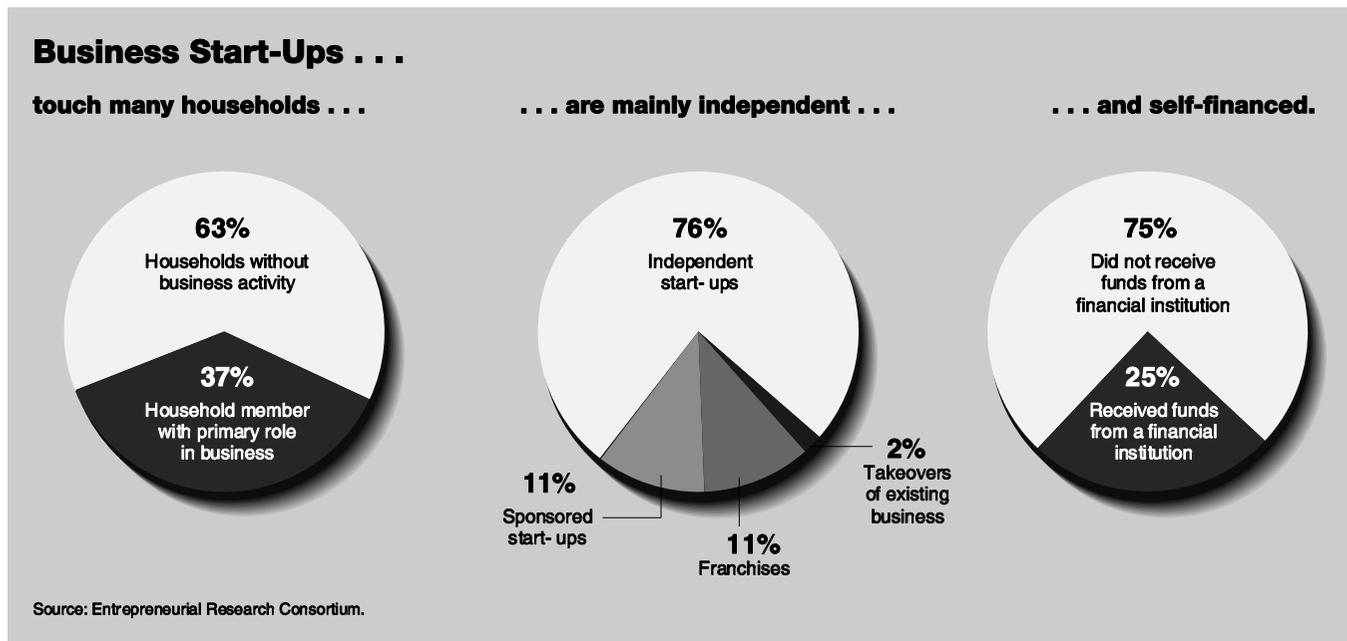
sponsored by existing businesses (11 percent); are due to franchise or multi-level marketing initiatives (11 percent); or result from takeovers of existing businesses (2 percent).

- Thirty-six percent of the nascent entrepreneurs said that their new business would be a sole proprietorship; 23 percent said it would be a corporation, and 5 percent said it would be a subchapter S corporation; 15 percent said their business would take the legal form of a general partnership, and 3 percent said a limited partnership.

- Forty-five percent of new start-ups will be owned by one person, 32 percent will be jointly owned by two persons, and 16 percent will be owned by three or more persons.

- To get their businesses established, 34 percent of respondents indicated they devote more than 35 hours each week to the new start-up, and 63 percent said they spend less than 35 hours per week.

- Nearly seven in 10 nascent entrepreneurs (69 percent) have in-



vested their own money in the start-up, and about three in 10 (28 percent) have not.

- One in four respondents (25 percent) have received funds from financial institutions or other sources, and about three in four (72 percent) have not.

- Seventy-seven percent of nascent entrepreneurs have sought unpaid advice from experts, and 23 percent have not done so. Forty-five percent of respondents have taken classes or workshops on starting a business; 55 percent have not. Eighteen percent have sought advice and consultation help from government agencies, while 79 percent have not used government services. Just 11 percent have contacted government programs that help new businesses get established; 88 percent of nascent entrepreneurs have not.

- Having made the effort to start a new business, 9 percent of the nascent entrepreneurs expected the life expectancy of their firms to be 90 years or more; 13 percent estimated between 40 and 60 years. Seventy-eight percent thought their businesses would survive 30 years or less.

Other studies have indicated that as many as four percent of U.S. adults (more than 7 million) are involved in more than 3 million business start-up efforts at any given time. The ERC is developing a national panel study to provide a more complete understanding of

the development of new and small firms over time.

According to Bruce D. Phillips, the director of Advocacy's Office of Economic Research and an ERC consortium participant, the next step for the ERC will be developing an extensive research agenda to explore the many facets of the entrepreneurial process. Said Phillips, "The U.S. panel study of business start-ups, with a much larger sample, will be used to explore factors that affect the presence of start-ups, successful firm births, and the early life of new firms. Dozens of teams of experienced scholars will study individual and personal factors, the economic and social context of the new firms, the influence of family, gender, and ethnic background, and the actual procedures and strategies involved in assembling resources to start a new firm."

Phillips added that because little systematic information currently exists about the business start-up process, the results of the ERC study should improve the effectiveness of educational and clinical programs, enhance the impact of government policies and programs, and contribute to creating a more efficient entrepreneurial climate.

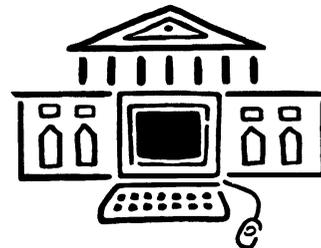
For further information on the ERC pilot study, contact Bruce D. Phillips, director of Advocacy's Office of Economic Research, via the Internet at bruce.phillips@sba.gov, or Zoltan Acs, chief economic advisor, at zoltan.acs@sba.gov.

About the ERC Study

The Entrepreneurial Research Consortium involved more than 90 scholars and researchers in the research design and data analysis of the pilot study just concluded. Babson College, in Wellesley, Mass., is the ERC host institution. The University of Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory in Madison, Wisc., developed the sample and collected the data. Interviews were conducted from August to October 1996, with a representa-

tive national sample of 754 households in the continental United States. Six business roles were considered: (1) current business owner, (2) nascent entrepreneur (that is, one who is in the process of starting a business), (3) nascent intrapreneur (one who is starting a business venture for his/her employer), (4) discouraged entrepreneur, (5) discontinued business owner, and (6) business angel.

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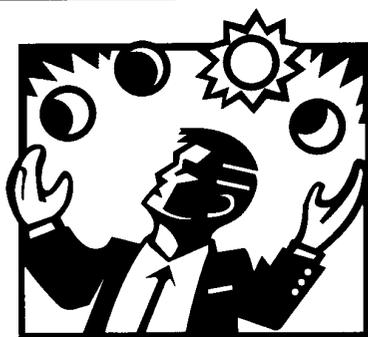
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The U.S. Business Advisor is a project of federal agencies in coordination with the U.S. Small Business Administration and the National Performance Review.



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The Small Business Answer Desk

Advocacy Economists Featured in New Book

Two Office of Advocacy economists, Zoltan J. Acs and Bruce D. Phillips, are authors featured in *Enterprise 2000*, a publication recently announced by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. The book, the fourth in a series that assesses the state of the art in entrepreneurship research, is available from Upstart Publishing Co. in Chicago.

In a chapter entitled "Birth and Death of New Firms," which was co-authored by Advocacy's Chief Economic Advisor Acs and Professor Bruce A. Kirchoff (a former chief economist for Advocacy), the authors focus on entry and exit rates of firms in Canada and the United States and discuss the macroeconomic variables that seem to affect the formation of new small firms. In particular, Acs and Kirchoff examine three variables related to firm survival—size, age, and growth. Increases in all of these three variables generally means higher survival rates.

In a chapter entitled, "Databases for Small Business Analysis," Advocacy's Director of Economic Research Phillips and co-author William J. Dennis, Jr., senior fellow of the NFIB Foundation, describe and contrast both public and private data sets useful for studying the small business sector. The SBA's

new Census-based data base is depicted, as well as a new NFIB/Wells Fargo series on new business entries and exits. According to Phillips and Dennis, no single data base is currently adequate to analyze the small business sector: there is little information about the owners of new firms, including their sources of capital and whether they are actually earning a profit; and federal and private data bases are too fragmented, covering different time periods, variables, and industries, making comparisons across sources difficult. The authors conclude that, with diminishing statistical resources for small business research, public-private research partnerships will be even more important in the future than they have been in the past.

Also featured in *Entrepreneurship 2000* are discussions on financing growth, entrepreneurship education, and broader dimensions of entrepreneurship, such as family-owned businesses.

The three books that preceded *Entrepreneurship 2000* (also published by Upstart Publishing Co.) are: *The Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship* (1982), *The Art and Science of Entrepreneurship* (1986), and *The State of the Art of Entrepreneurship* (1992).

Internaut's Hot Spot: Advocacy's Web Site

The Office of Advocacy's site on the World Wide Web offers Internet users access to the latest information on small business. Topics include small business demographics, job creation, income growth, business formation and dissolution, innovation data, and federal procurement. Also available are the Office of Advocacy's bank lending reports (including the 1996 edition of *Small Business Lending in the United States*), summaries of recently completed research projects,

information on Advocacy's angel capital project (ACE-Net), *The Small Business Advocate*, and much more.

Future additions planned for the Web site include detailed statistical tables from the data appendix of the latest edition of *The State of Small Business*, the annual economic report on small business that is prepared by the Office of Advocacy.

The Office of Advocacy's site on the World Wide Web can be found at <http://www.sba.gov/ADVO/>.

Business Failures Held Steady in 1996, for Third Year in a Row

For the third year in a row, the number of failed businesses remained about the same. According to the Dun & Bradstreet Corp., business failures in 1996 numbered 71,811, compared with 71,558 failures in 1995 and 71,128 in 1994. Additionally, liabilities from business failures dropped 9 percent during 1996, an improvement over 1995.

Commenting on these figures, Advocacy's Chief Counsel Jere W. Glover said, "When you consider that new firms that fail usually do so during their first three years of existence, this result is quite impressive, given the large increase in new business formation during the past three years."

Despite the constancy of the national numbers, there were some differences in 1996 across regions, compared with recent years. For example, on a percentage basis, failures declined in all regions of the east coast. They dropped 10 percent in New England (included in Region I) and 10.3 percent in Region III (Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Vir-

While the number of business failures nationally remained constant in 1996, the regional numbers paint a different picture.

ginia, and West Virginia). Region III seems to be responding now to improved business conditions. In contrast, SBA Regions V, VI, VII, IX, and X all recorded small percentage increases in business failures during 1996. Region VIII (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming) posted a 33.5-percent increase; failures in Colorado increased 51.5 percent, driving the regional total upward.

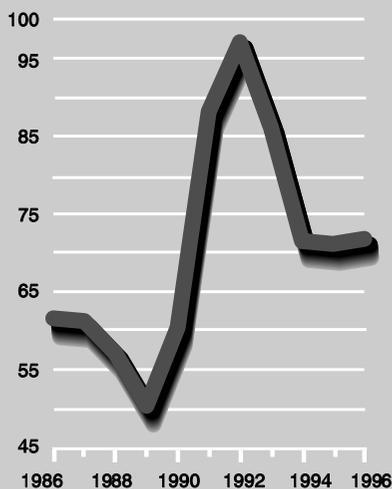
In contrast, the regional changes occurring between 1994 and 1995 were more randomly distributed geographically. For example, Re-

gions II and III (which showed small percentage declines in failures from 1995 to 1996), registered increases between 1994 and 1995. In addition, Region IX, led by California, showed a 2.3-percent decline between 1994 and 1995, but a 1.7-percent increase in the 1995-1996 period. It is doubtful, however, whether these small changes were statistically significant.

For a copy of the state failure data, consult Advocacy's Web site at <http://www.sba.gov/ADVO/stats/>. Comments and technical questions may be directed to Advocacy's Office of Economic Research at (202) 205-6530.

Failures Hold Steady . . .

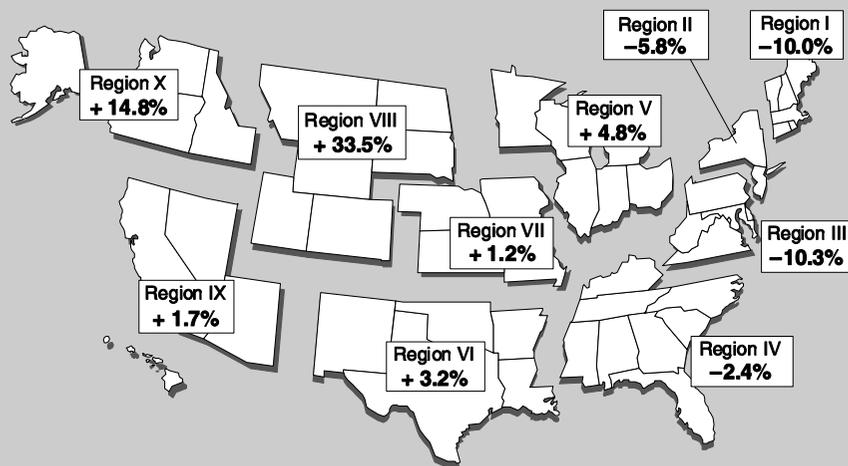
Business failures, 1986 - 1996 (thousands)



Source: Adapted by the U.S. Small Business Administration from data published by the Dun and Bradstreet Corp.

. . . with Regional Variations

Percent change in number of business failures, 1995 - 1996, by SBA region



Bank Lending, from page 1

Advocacy's list of bank holding companies was KeyCorp, based in Cleveland, Ohio, with a 25-percent increase in small business lending in 1996. "KeyCorp's small business lending achievement is especially significant, considering that the increase is real, not just a reflection of increased assets because of mergers and acquisitions," said Jere W. Glover, the SBA's chief counsel for advocacy. "KeyCorp has learned that small business lending is good business, and we hope to see more and more larger banks following their lead."

According to the *Bank Holding Company Study*, 27 large bank holding companies made a total of \$48.8 billion in small business loans in 1996, up from \$39.3 billion in 1995. "Overall, this is good news for small firms," said Glover. "The nation's largest banks are increasing the capital pool for small businesses. Of course there's room for improvement, given that small business lending by a number of these large banks has not grown as rapidly as bank assets."

Included in the study of bank holding companies is a listing of the top three lenders in small business loan volume in each state. This segment of the study allows a quick overview of the top small business commercial bank lenders nationwide.

A third study, the 1996 edition of *Micro-Business-Friendly Banks in the United States*, highlights the banks with outstanding achievements in making business loans of under \$100,000. The study identifies 478 such "micro-business-friendly" banks, which had \$15.8 billion in loans under \$100,000 outstanding as of June 1996.

"Information rationalizes markets," Glover said in reference to the three studies. "The more competitive a market is, the more efficient it becomes, providing more and better quality services. By publicizing this information, we believe we're helping increase bank competition to provide capital to the dynamic small business sector.

What's Changed in the 1996 Bank Lending Study

Since the publication of the first small business lending report in December 1994, the Office of Advocacy has received many comments and suggestions on improving the study from the banking and small business communities, federal banking regulators, and from congressional House and Senate Banking and Small Business Committees. In response to these suggestions, the following changes have been made in the 1996 study to achieve a more balanced rating system to better identify "small-business-friendly" banks:

- The summary total statistic that determines rank no longer in-

cludes the ratio of small business loans to total deposits. This change permits a more balanced composite score for banks of varying size.

- A second table was added to identify the small-business-friendly banks by asset size classification.

- Bank asset size classes were revised to reflect the recent market changes in the banking structure.

- Banks with a significant amount of business credit card activity are identified.

We're also finding that small-business-friendly banks are more profitable than banks making few small business loans. So both small businesses and banks profit from healthy small business loan portfolios."

All of Advocacy's lending studies are analyses of the Consolidated Reports of Condition and Income, or "call reports," that banks must file quarterly with federal bank regulatory agencies. Chief Counsel Glover noted that call report data tell only a part of the story about lending to small business, namely the financial institution part. Some lending information may not be reported in call reports, or may not be discernible as small business financing.

"Despite the limitations," asserted Glover, "call report data provide sufficient information to present a fairly accurate picture of lending to small business in the U.S. economy. And they are currently the only source of small business lending information available to the public."

For technical information on these latest releases of *Small Business Lending in the United States*, the *Bank Holding Company Study*,

or *Micro-Business-Friendly Banks in the United States*, contact Dr. Charles Ou, senior economist, Office of Advocacy, (202) 205-6966; fax (202) 205-6928.

How To Get the Reports

Readers with access to the Internet's World Wide Web can look at the Office of Advocacy's lending studies at <http://www.sba.gov/SmallBusinessLending1996/>

Copies of *Small Business Lending in the United States* are also available for purchase from the National Technical Information Service (NTIS). Call NTIS at (703) 487-4650; TDD: (703) 487-4639. For paper or microfiche copies, ask for item no. PB97-141410; for an IBM-PC compatible floppy disk, ask for item no. PB97-502041.

Regulatory Agencies

New Threat to Small Businesses: Travel Fraud

by Jennifer Smith

Travel is one of the fastest growing industries in the United States. Unfortunately, the potential for fraud often accompanies rapid industry growth. In the travel industry, fraud affects small business people who may be consumers or entrepreneurs in the business.

There are various modes of travel fraud. In the traditional sense, fraud may occur through false contests, the sale of illegal travel contracts, and the sale of stolen items, such as airline tickets purchased with a stolen credit card. Recently, the industry has been aware of a new type of travel fraud—the sale of false travel credentials. The potential victims of this fraud may be both the purchaser of the credentials and the purchaser of the travel services.

In the fraud, the perpetrator sells an aspiring entrepreneur documents that allegedly provide the entrepreneur with the necessary credentials for being a travel agent. The credentials identify the bearer as a travel agent and enable that person to receive professional courtesies that are usually reserved for professional travel agents. Although the purchaser may believe that he or she now has the required credentials for operating a travel agency, the purchaser does not have the appropriate training to be a travel agent. The lack of proper training poses potential harm to the public in that the “agent” may not be able to make travel arrangements in a competent manner. Additionally, the “agent” is diverting business from professional travel agents.

Sadly, not all the entrepreneurial “agents” obtain false travel credentials innocently. Some unsavory characters obtain false travel credentials for the specific purpose of perpetrating a fraud. False credentials allow criminals to hold them-

Small business owners need to protect themselves against scams perpetrated by unscrupulous operators in one of the fastest-growing industries.

selves out to consumers and businesses as bona fide travel agents. The credentials allow fraudulent agents to obtain free services and other professional courtesies that are usually only available to genuine travel agents. Such services and courtesies may range from a free meal or lodging to free or reduced-price transportation. Many of these free services are offered by small businesses.

Moreover, with the false creden-

tials, the perpetrators are able to swindle funds from consumers and small businesses that are interested in purchasing travel services. The consumers and small businesses will entrust the fraudulent company with funds to obtain travel services that the fraudulent company has no intention of delivering. They may not learn of the fraud until the “travel company” has gone on a trip itself—with all of the funds.

If you believe that you are a victim of travel fraud, contact the Federal Trade Commission, the Office of Consumer Affairs, or the attorney general’s office for your state.

Jennifer Smith is assistant chief counsel for international trade and economic regulation in the Office of Advocacy. She may be contacted by e-mail at jennifer.smith@sba.gov.

How to Avoid Travel Fraud

Generally, the old rule of thumb of “if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is” is an appropriate precautionary step with regard to travel. Here are some prevention tips for the small business consumer, as well as all consumers of travel services.

- Beware of “bargain” offers and “contests” that may have hidden charges.
- Adopt a “no-surprise” travel policy, understanding the contents of all travel packages and getting in writing the total cost for any contract.
- Avoid high-pressure sales pitches.
- Only provide credit card and bank information to businesses that you know.
- Try to use a known reputable travel agent in the community. If the information about the agency is questionable, contact the American Society of Travel Agents, the National Tour Association, or the U.S. Tour Operators’ Association.

News Briefs

Quality Jobs Program Honors Two Oklahoma Businesses

Till Phillips, the SBA's national advocate for rural affairs, and Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating joined local legislators and community leaders in Durant, Okla., on Nov. 14, 1996, to salute two rural businesses—Sundowner Trailer, Inc., of Coleman, and Heartland Wireless Communications, of Durant—for their tremendous achievements in creating quality jobs.

The Quality Jobs Programs, Oklahoma's nationally acclaimed industry incentive, provides quarterly cash payments of up to 5 percent of new taxable payroll to qualifying companies for up to 10 years. A company must achieve a \$2.5 million taxable payroll for consecutive quarters during the first 12 quarters in the program.

In 1992, Sundowner Trailer, a manufacturer of horse and stock trailers, was awarded an SBA 504 loan for \$1.5 million for facilities expansion.

(The 504 Program provides long-term, fixed-asset financing through nonprofit organizations sponsored by private interests or by state and local governments.)

Participants in the financing included Rural Enterprises of Oklahoma, Inc., the First National Bank, Durant, and the Oklahoma Department of Commerce's Community Development Block Grant Program.

Today, Sundowner Trailer employs 560 people, is constructing a 200,000 sq. ft. manufacturing facility for modular, production-line assembly of the company's top-of-the-line luxury horse trailers, and projects employment of 1,000 by the year 2000.



L to R: Larry Shipman, president of Sundowner Trailer, Inc., Allen Wheeler, president of Heartland Wireless Communications, and Gov. Frank Keating in Durant, Okla., at presentation of the state's "Quality Jobs Award" to the two businesses.

Also receiving a Quality Jobs Award was Heartland Wireless Communications, of Durant. Heartland Wireless offers wireless cable television systems to rural America. To accommodate its expansion needs, Heartland Wireless has renovated numerous buildings in downtown Durant, including facilities for its corporate headquarters, operations and technical support, installation and services, training center, telemarketing services, and warehousing.

Heartland Wireless is in 40 markets and adding more daily. This innovative company has provided 300 quality jobs in Durant and an additional 380 across Oklahoma.

"The awards ceremony honoring these Quality Jobs businesses is tes-

timony that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in rural Oklahoma," Phillips said. "The small communities of Durant and Coleman are great examples of successful economic development at the grass roots level."

"Inc. 500" List Looking for Applicants

The search is on for America's fastest growing private firms. The *Inc. 500* is *Inc.* magazine's annual list of America's fastest-growing private companies. The magazine puts together the ranking by drawing from applications from thousands of businesses. The 1997 list is being put together now. Companies that make the list receive national recognition in the special *Inc. 500* fall issue.

The businesses must meet the following criteria: (1) independent, privately held corporations, proprie-

torships, or partnerships (not a subsidiary or division); (2) sales of at least \$200,000 in 1992; (3) a five-year operating/sales history that includes an increase in 1996 sales over 1995 sales; and (4) not a regulated bank or utility.

The deadline for applications is May 2, 1997. To obtain an application, call (617) 248-8484. Additional information is available at *Inc.* magazine's Web site, <http://www.inc.com/500/>.

Disability Conference to Feature Employment Fair

Bridging the future is both the theme and goal of the 50th annual conference of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (PCEPD). Business and legal realities dictate that employers cannot afford to overlook a vast pool of potential employees, the 40 million Americans with disabilities.

As part of the PCEPD confer-

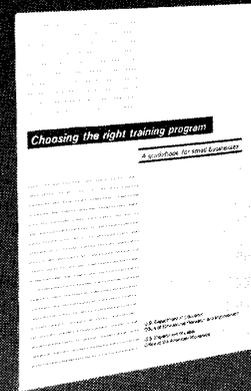
ence, an employment fair will be held on June 6 at the Washington Hilton and Towers Hotel in Washington, D.C., to facilitate the recruitment and hiring of applicants with disabilities. For registration information, visit the PCEPD's Web site at <http://www.pcepd.gov>, or contact Dale Brown at (202) 376-6200.

Coming Soon: National Small Business Week 1997

The 34th annual celebration of National Small Business Week will be held June 1-7, 1997. During Small Business Week, the nation recognizes the finest examples of small business achievement and success. Awards for Small Business Person of the Year, Small Business Exporter, Young Entrepreneur, Entre-

preneurial Success, and many Small Business Advocate categories are presented in each state, and national awards are presented in Washington, D.C. To learn what your state is doing to celebrate Small Business Week, contact your nearest SBA district office.

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Choosing the Right Training Program is available for purchase from your local U.S. Government Bookstore or by mail from the Superintendent of Documents, P. O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954. Ask for publication no. 065-000-00635-9. The cost is \$3.25 per copy, postpaid.

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