

**Statement for Introduction of the
Small Business Export Enhancement and International Trade Act of 2009
Senator Olympia J. Snowe
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Small Business
December 9, 2009**

Ms. Snowe. Mr. President, I rise today with my colleague, Senate Small Business Committee Chair Landrieu, to introduce the “Small Business Export Enhancement and International Trade Act of 2009.” This bipartisan measure would provide improved and expanded support for small businesses, through critical programs and reforms, to ensure that, as we emerge from this protracted recession, American small businesses are primed for success in the global marketplace and are able to create and sustain high-paying jobs.

I would like to thank Chair Landrieu for her efforts on this critical issue and for working with me and my staff to merge our respective bills into one bipartisan measure that will help small businesses stay competitive, help them grow, and speed the recovery of our economy as a whole.

As Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, and as a senior member of both the Senate Finance and Commerce Committees, one of my top priorities is to ensure that small businesses get the promised benefits of our international trade relationships and are able to compete in the world economy.

While globalization has created opportunities for U.S. small businesses to sell their goods and services in new markets, not enough small businesses are taking advantage of these international prospects. In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, less than one percent of the approximately 27 million

U.S. small businesses currently sell their products to foreign buyers. Small businesses are a vital source of economic growth and job creation, generating nearly two-thirds of net new jobs each year. Small businesses are essential to our economic recovery, and we must help them take advantage of all potential opportunities, including those in foreign markets.

Small businesses face particular challenges in exporting. It can be difficult for small exporting firms to secure the working capital needed to fulfill foreign purchase orders, for instance, because many lenders won't lend against export orders or export receivables. Small business owners may not know how to connect with foreign buyers, or may not have the time or resources necessary to understand other countries' rules and regulations.

Currently, federal programs are grossly inadequate at helping small businesses overcome the challenges of exporting. The "Small Business Export Enhancement and International Trade Act," which we are introducing today, gives small businesses the critical resources and assistance needed to explore potential export opportunities, or to expand their current export business.

Our bipartisan legislation includes provisions from bills I have introduced in past Congresses, since the 109th, to elevate the head of the Small Business Administration (SBA) office responsible for trade and export programs to the Associate Administrator-level, reporting directly to the Administrator.

Further, it includes all of the key provisions from the small business trade bill that I introduced earlier this year, S. 1208, the Small Business Export Opportunity Development Act of 2009. These critical provisions would bolster the SBA's technical assistance programs and improve export financing programs

to ensure that small businesses have access to the capital needed to support export sales. The legislation also increases the coordination among other federal agencies – the Department of Commerce, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and the Export-Import Bank – to ensure that small businesses benefit from all the export assistance the federal government offers.

This legislation also includes a program I proposed earlier this year in S. 1208 to provide grants to help small businesses start or expand export activity, such as participation in foreign trade missions, foreign market sales trips, training workshops and payment of website translation fees. It also improves the SBA’s network of international trade counselors and enhances the export assistance provided to small business clients through the Small Business Development Center network, which has over 1,000 locations nationwide.

Our bill increases the maximum size of SBA-guaranteed export working capital and international trade loans from a current level of \$2 million to a new level of \$5 million, consistent with the levels established in my bill, S. 1615, the “Next Steps for a Main Street Recovery Act,” which I introduced in August and the President called for last month. This bill also establishes a permanent Export Express program, a streamlined, expedited loan program to get capital to exporters quickly and efficiently, so they can focus on the terms of the sale and preparing their product for shipment. It also establishes a program to provide support for small businesses related to trade disputes and unfair international trade practices, which is critical for our entrepreneurs who have suffered from illegal activities by our trading partners.

Small businesses can survive, diversify, and compete effectively in the international marketplace by developing an export business. But, as I

mentioned, too few small businesses are expanding into international markets. This legislation will help small business owners take the crucial steps of finding international buyers for their goods and services and will enable small business owners to secure the financing needed to fill orders from foreign buyers.

This investment could yield tremendous returns for our economy. The United States spends just one-sixth of the international average on export promotion and assistance among developed countries in promoting small businesses exports. Every additional dollar spent on export promotion results in a 40-fold increase in exports, according to a World Bank study.

We cannot overlook the impact of trade on small businesses. An investment in small business exporting assistance is an investment in our economy. I ask all of my Senate colleagues to support this vital legislation.

Mr. President, I request unanimous consent that a copy of the bill and my remarks be printed at the appropriate place in the Congressional Record.