

**Statement of Marie Collins Johns  
Nominee for Deputy Administrator  
U.S. Small Business Administration**

**Before the**

**Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship  
United States Senate**

**May 19, 2010**

Thank you, Chair Landrieu, Ranking Member Snowe and members of the Committee. And thank you Congressman Carson for that kind introduction and for your support. It is an honor to be nominated for this position by President Obama, and it is an honor to appear before you today.

The SBA's mission to help small businesses grow and create jobs has never been more important. I believe that my experience will help SBA advance that mission in the months and years to come.

Like many Americans, small business is part of my family history. My grandfather owned a landscaping business in Indianapolis. And nearly 50 years ago, my uncle returned home with a degree in Pharmacy from Howard University, and he couldn't find a job. So, my grandfather helped him build his own community pharmacy to serve the African-American community. Since then, the spirit of entrepreneurship has been at the core of my personal and professional life.

I'd like to briefly touch on my qualifications for the position of Deputy Administrator. Then, I'll offer a few thoughts on the important work of the SBA.

During my career, I have been active in my local Chamber of Commerce, which happens to be the D.C. Chamber. The majority of the Chamber's members are small businesses. I served as its overall Chair as well as a three-year term as Chair of its Small Business Committee. In that role, I helped "Main Street" businesses get technical assistance and mentoring from larger firms in the area. I also helped create a Visitors Center to encourage tourists to venture "off the Mall" and explore D.C.'s many vibrant neighborhoods and small businesses.

Importantly, I have also helped small firms that are poised for growth. Specifically, I founded and chaired the Washington D.C. Technology Council which has brought together entrepreneurs, thought leaders, and cutting-edge researchers. Together, they formed coalitions and partnerships that are helping the District diversify its local economy and create good jobs.

My career itself consists of over 20 years in telecommunications. I started as a first-level manager and later retired as President of Verizon for this local area – a mid-sized unit of about 2,000 employees. Many of our customers were small businesses, so we developed products and services to meet their needs. In addition, I learned about the tools and regulatory conditions to help both my company and their businesses grow in tandem. We also had strong relationships with our suppliers, vendors, and subcontractors, some of whom were, in fact, SBA borrowers. And finally, we were also involved in special projects such as training young people in how to get jobs in the telecommunications industry.

On a personal level, I have a 30-year record of civic leadership. For 10 years, I served as a trustee for Howard University, which is home to one of SBA's Small Business Development Centers. I also served on the board of Howard University Hospital and as chair of the board of Howard University Middle School of Mathematics and Science. I have also served on the board of Girl Scouts USA, who – as we all know – are some of the most effective entrepreneurs in America.

Recently, I have become familiar with the SBA's big mission during this critical time.

In regards to capital, I believe the President's Jobs proposals – such as extending Recovery loan provisions and increasing the loan limits – are critically important. I also support the Agency's recent self-stated goal to increase its network of active lenders. It is important that SBA provide more "points of access to capital," especially for underserved populations which the Agency serves so well.

In regards to contracting, the Agency took a strong step forward with the new proposed women's contracting rule. I believe this is an important complement to SBA's contracting efforts with disadvantaged businesses, veterans and others. In addition, I know that Administrator Mills and her team are working hard to create cleaner and more transparent data while removing ineligible firms.

In regards to counseling and training – if confirmed – I would like to play an active role in reaching out to various groups that have been hard-hit by the recession, including women and minority-owned small business. Putting loans, contracts, and other job-creation tools in the hands of these fast-growing segments of the economy should be a priority.

And, of course, I believe the Agency should continue to ensure that its disaster assistance program is working efficiently and effectively to respond to regional and national disasters, such as the ones we've seen in the Gulf Coast and in Tennessee.

Truly, the SBA has a critical mission. I have seen Congress and this Committee working closely with Administrator Mills to reinvigorate the SBA and make a strong impact. For example, Congress has provided for nearly \$27 billion in lending support for small businesses through SBA Recovery loans. I believe we can do even more by reaching out and creating robust two-way communication with even more entrepreneurs, small business owners, and partners.

The SBA has a strong suite of services. We can build on what works, eliminate what doesn't, and give taxpayers a strong return on their investment. If we do that, I know small businesses will have more opportunities to create jobs and lead us into full recovery as they have done time-and-time again throughout American history.

Briefly, I want to thank a few family members for being here: my husband Wendell L. Johns, my mother Frieda Casey-Collins, my son and daughter-in-law Richard and Lynn Johns, my grandchildren Richard Franklin and Lauren Marie, and my goddaughter Olivia Jordan Albury and her parents Natalie Ludaway and Duane Albury.

Thank you all and I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

####