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November 8, 2011

Congress of the United States  
US House of Representatives  
Committee on Small Business  
2361 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington DC 20515-6315

RE: Subcommittee Hearing

Dear Members of the Congressional Board:

On behalf of the local Sumter-Clarendon HBA, I am grateful for this opportunity to speak with you today. I would also like to thank all of the local businesses and the Sumter Board of Realtors that have supported the growth of this community and the never ending support of Shaw Air Force Base. Together with these organizations we have raised a great deal of money locally in support of Shaw Air Force Base and its growth through the addition of the "Welcome Third Army Campaign." As this town will benefit greatly from the addition of new friends and neighbors with a growing economy here, our local builders and subcontractors are suffering from a dramatic decrease in new construction sales. As our local HBA members have declined by over 30% over the past 3 years many of us are asking the question "With the number of new homes on the market now in our community why is the government building hundreds of new homes to depress our market further."

The next question is if the homes are going to be built nevertheless why aren't we the ones who live here and support this base and this community, the ones building these homes?

This brings us to the concerns of this hearing today. Why aren't small businesses receiving at a minimum the percentage of business as described by this government. Let me say that it is not because of lack of local labor force but the lack of the opportunity.

At a local meeting held by Hensel Phelps, the awarded contractor of these homes, I saw over a hundred small business owners from this community excited about the chance to go back to work. I also saw some local business owners there that stated to me, "We will never have a chance at this project." I later found this to be true. Hensel Phelps placed such stringent guidelines and unrealistic expectations that it became obvious that this meeting was a tool for this company to say we offered. There were only three (3) companies at this meeting that I am aware of that might have the financial resources to possibly meet their requirements. I would say at least this would definitely deter our local small businesses from ever receiving an opportunity

to work on this project. I personally registered at the meeting with my name and address, expecting to receive a bid package that never came. When I followed up with phone calls I was informed that Hensel Phelps wanted companies that could commit to numerous bases. Knowing full well that my small business couldn't take on this amount of work I had to face the realization that my idea of small business and theirs is two completely different things. Two weeks ago, I followed up again by phone and I was given the name of a company based in West Virginia to see if I could gain employment from them to work on a base minutes from my home that my neighbors and I have supported through the BRAC list just a few years ago, to meeting hundreds of families this past year from Fort McPherson welcoming them to our community.

This leaves me with the third question, "If the government sets aside a percentage of business for small business owners, who determines the amount or the cap of a small business?" The figure given to me is \$35,000,000. I am not certain this is correct, but if it is why is it so high? These seem to be obvious loop holes for large companies like Hensel Phelps to exclude the small businesses, at least in this community.

My final question or concern is who regulates or polices that the opportunity is given to small business owners like myself.

Sincerely yours,

William K. Aycock, Jr.