



Chairman Curbelo Opening Statement

Subcommittee on Agriculture, Energy and Trade

SBA's Office of International Trade: Good for Business?

WASHINGTON - House Committee on Small Business Subcommittee Chairman Carlos Curbelo (R-FL) today convened a hearing entitled [SBA's Office of International Trade: Good for Business?](#)

Chairman Curbelo's Opening Statement as prepared for delivery:

Good afternoon. I call this hearing to order. Thank you all for joining us today for this hearing on the Small Business Administration's Office of International Trade (OIT). I hope through this hearing, this Committee can identify some potential methods to strengthen our work with the SBA to better support small businesses seeking export opportunities.

This Subcommittee has stressed time and time again, the small business benefits of foreign markets. Ninety-five percent of all consumers live outside the borders of the United States, and yet, only one percent of United States small businesses actually export. Despite that low percentage, trade is still a vital way for small businesses to find new markets. In my home state of Florida, 96 percent of our exports were from small firms; those same small firms generated roughly two-thirds of our state's export value. However, while this is a tremendous start, many small businesses still find exporting a costly, complicated, and confusing process. In 2010, this Administration put forth the National Export Initiative—a strategy that prioritized small business exports. That same year Congress also directed the SBA to expand its role in export promotion. Specifically, the SBA was tasked with increasing coordination efforts between federal agencies engaged in export promotion, offering greater counseling and training to small businesses interested in expanding into foreign markets, and broadening its export financing efforts.

I understand the SBA has worked to strengthen these efforts through the co-location of staff at a network of U.S. Export Assistance Centers (USEACs), and I am also aware that SBA operates through nonfederal partners like the Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), resources that devote substantial time to the promotion of exports. Frankly, it sounds like these resources could be invaluable to small businesses engaging in international trade. However, the OIT has only dedicated 19 trade specialists to the various USEACs around the country—11 short of the 30 required by the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010. And, although the SBA has appointed District International Trade Officers to assist businesses seeking advice on exporting, the Government Accountability Office recently reported that those staff only spend about 15 percent of their time on export promotion. So, here we are; six years after the Small Business Jobs Act. Goals and objectives that have been pushed by the Administration and statutorily mandated by the United States Congress are still incomplete—and I am concerned that the OIT may actually be serving a redundant purpose. If there are massive deficiencies in SBA's efforts to better coordinate federal trade promotion resources; if the OIT is offering trade counseling and training that is also being provided by (SBDCs), the Department of Commerce, and other State, Federal, and private entities; if OIT is failing to follow through on the very legislative mandates established to hire more staff for the purpose of heightening the presence and function of OIT, then maybe it is time we in Congress give serious reconsideration to the long-term validity of the Office of International Trade altogether.

Today, we will hear from OIT's Associate Administrator, Eileen Sanchez, on how SBA plans to implement GAO's recommendations as well as how they plan to assist more small businesses yearning to join the global marketplace. Thank you again, and I now yield to the Ranking Member for her opening remarks.