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NOMINATIONS OF WILLIAM BRIGGS TO BE DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR OF THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND DR. CASEY MULLIGAN TO BE CHIEF COUNSEL FOR ADVOCACY AT THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

OF THE

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

MARCH 12, 2025

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MARCH 12, 2025

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NOMINATION OF WILLIAM BRIGGS TO BE
DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR OF
THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND
DR.CASEY MULLIGAN TO BE CHIEF COUNSEL
FOR ADVOCACY AT THE
SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2025

United States Senate,
Committee on Small Business
and Entrepreneurship,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:41 p.m., in Room 428A, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Joni Ernst, Chair of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Ernst [presiding], Hawley, Justice, Husted, Markey, Cantwell, and Hickenlooper.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ERNST

Chair. I call the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship to order. The purpose of today's hearing is to consider two of President Trump's nominees. First, we have Mr. Bill Briggs to serve as Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration. And our second nominee is Dr. Casey Mulligan to serve as the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of SBA's Office of Advocacy. I'd like to welcome you both here today and thank you very much for your willingness to serve.

Just to give folks a quick run of show, I'm going to make brief opening statements, then I'll turn to Ranking Member Markey to do the same. Then I will introduce the nominees and we'll administer the oath. After the oath, Mr. Briggs, and then Dr. Mulligan will be recognized for their statements. These statements will be followed by questions from our Members, alternating between each side. I now recognize myself for five minutes for the purposes of an opening statement. Again, welcome to the Committee and thank you Mr. Briggs and Dr. Mulligan for your willingness to serve in these roles.

Today, we are considering nominees for two very important positions. I greatly appreciate the time you've spent meeting with me and my colleagues prior to this hearing. I want to take a minute to recognize some of the family and friends who are supporting you both today. First, and just raise your hand when I read your name, please.

First, I want to recognize some of Mr. Briggs family, his parents, Dodie and Bill. Thank you for being here. As well as his siblings, Susan, Robert, Ted, and his nephew, Braden. Thank you all for being here. And then for Dr. Mulligan, I would like to welcome your wife, Julia. Thank you, Julia. And three of your five children, John, Elizabeth, which is also my daughter's name, thank you, and Maeve. Hi Maeve. Thank you. We appreciate you all making the trip here.

I appreciate that you both have fully embraced the Committee's standard, yet extensive vetting of your experiences and backgrounds in advance of today's hearing and our upcoming vote on your nominations. As I've shared with both of you, I believe substantial reforms must be made to get the SBA back in shape, and that is going to require strong leadership. I am thrilled with Administrator Loeffler's actions so far, but she will need a strong partner, and that is why the deputy administrator role is so critical.

Traditionally, SBA administers programs and services falling into three main buckets: counseling, contracting, and access to capital. Mr. Briggs, previously you worked at SBA during the critical implementation of the Paycheck Protection Program. These funds were vital to ensuring Main Street businesses across America kept their doors open during the pandemic.

Unfortunately, there has been fraud in SBA's programs, especially in the Covid Economic Injury Disaster Loan or EIDL Program, and I want to know how you will continue to work with me to root out these fraudsters. Small businesses needed help, and American taxpayers provided it. But it is completely unacceptable that bad actors took advantage of this emergency assistance. Even more alarming, the federal government hasn't held these criminals accountable. But that must change. So, I look forward to hearing how you will recoup these funds.

As you know, Covid recovery is not the only challenge small businesses faced over the last five years. In my home state of Iowa, small businesses are the lifeblood of our rural communities, and for too long, they've been crushed with red tape, and burdensome and often unnecessary reporting requirements with no one caring about how that affects day-to-day operations.

This brings me to the role of the Chief Counsel for Advocacy. Dr. Mulligan, I am impressed with your background and extensive work to ensure economic analysis properly reflects the cost to small businesses. The cost of regulations for small businesses is out of control. The last administration promulgated more than 1,100 final rules costing $1.8 trillion. The Biden administration's regulatory costs were 600 times higher than that of the first Trump administration, and 3.7 times higher than that of the Obama administration.

I have been encouraged by President Trump's executive orders to freeze and roll back regulations. This, to me, shows a clear understanding of the need to evaluate the effects, both direct and indirect, that government regulation is having on America's economic growth. That said, Advocacy's role remains true, regardless of party, to ensure that a strong Chief Counsel stands up for the little guy and warns regulators when small firms will be harmed.

I have introduced the PROVE IT Act, again, this Congress, which requires agencies to consider both the direct and indirect costs placed on small businesses when promulgating regulations. It also creates a process where small entities and representative organizations can ask Advocacy to formally review an agency's certification of a rule and prove it is fully compliant with the law.

I want to ensure that agencies respect and adhere to the existing laws and give Advocacy further tools to dissuade federal bureaucrats from making poor decisions that harm small businesses. This is why Advocacy needs a confirmed Chief Counsel, and I'm pleased that the President acted swiftly with this nomination. I want to thank you both for being here, and I look forward to your testimony.

I now recognize Ranking Member Markey for his opening statement.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR MARKEY

Senator Markey. Thank you, Madam Chair, very much.

The Small Business Administration is intended to support small businesses by providing capital contracts and counseling, but so far Trump's SBA only produce closures, and cuts, and chaos. Across the federal government, Elon Musk's army of unelected bureaucrats is taking a chainsaw to agencies cutting contracts and breaking promises. About a quarter of all canceled contracts were to small businesses in our country.

The President's already cut contracts with small businesses all across our country, many of which were owned by women and people in minority groups. The Veterans Affairs Administration also announced $2 billion in contract cancellations, including some to veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses.

Meanwhile, DOGE has barely touched the largest government contractors who were responsible for more than $200 billion in federal contract spending last year. $2 billion, they're all over that. Those are the smaller companies. $200 billion, the big defense contractors, they can't find any fraud. And we know there's waste in fraud all over those contracts. Going to be honest about it.

At SBA, specifically, Musk's minions who have no government experience and zero small business understanding, they've already fired 720 employees at the SBA. 20 percent of the workforce has already been laid off, and this includes those focused on disaster recovery such as victims in North Carolina and California. As these small businesses seek to rebuild, they're laying off the SBA personnel who would be able to hear them listen to their claims.

DOGE is also closing SBA district offices to cut costs, including in Springfield, Massachusetts. We had a witness here from Springfield, Massachusetts just three weeks ago. Well, they've closed down that office now where that would've been processed. This will make it harder for local small business owners to get help from a real-life human being. On top of this. SBA also announced they would relocate six regional offices, including the Boston location, over unfounded immigration issues.

Administrator Loeffler has not provided Congress with any information about these activities. We don't know who has been fired. We don't know which offices will remain open. And we certainly don't know how many small businesses have been left without services because of the sudden unprecedented slash and burn tactics.

Today, the committee is meeting to consider the nominations of Mr. Bill Briggs to be SBA deputy administrator and Dr. Casey Mulligan to be chief counsel at SBAs Office of Advocacy. Mr. Briggs served as the acting associate administrator during the first Trump administration, and worked on the Paycheck Protection Program in 2020, which provided needed relief to American small businesses during the pandemic and serves as a shining example of what Congress can do when we work together.

Traditionally, Mr. Briggs would report to the SBA administrator and carry out day-to-day operations, but until this committee gets answers about DOGE operations at SBA, I believe considering this nominee is premature. Senator Shaheen requested a briefing on DOGE inside the SBA in this committee four weeks ago, just so the committee can understand what's going on.

And I'm disappointed that the Trump administration still has not complied. We haven't had any DOGE people come in to brief us. What are they doing inside the SBA? We're the committee of jurisdiction. We're the committee that created it. Will DOGE please tell us what they're doing next.

We're considering Dr. Casey Mulligan. Dr. Mulligan has been nominated to oversee the Office of Advocacy; an independent agency within SBA charged with advancing the views, concerns, and interests of small businesses before the federal government. The beauty of this office is its independence. It is statutorily required to operate separately, not only from SBA, but from the White House. That's statutorily. However, DOGE has already infiltrated the Office of Advocacy and threatened its independent status.

Separately, I am concerned about Dr. Mulligan's potential approach to this role. Dr. Mulligan is an economist at the University of Chicago, a widely respected institution. But based on his work, I believe his views about regulations lie far outside the mainstream. He questions policies most Americans take for granted; a minimum wage, paid sick leave, reasonable limits on pollution and rules that prevent insurers from discriminating against people with preexisting conditions. Without such policies, we would be taken back to a Dickensian world with no worker, environmental, patient, or consumer protections.

Regardless of who is President, every entrepreneur should be able to rely on SBA to help them start and grow their business. We must return to this principle and be dependable for the 34 million American small businesses that run our country. Unfortunately, I do not think that is the goal which Elon Musk and President Trump have for our country. So, Madam Chair, I yield back.

Chair. Yeah. Thank you, Ranking Member Markey. And as noted by Senator Markey on February 12th at our hearing, Senator Shaheen did request an update from DOGE at the SBA, and I have made that request. The two gentlemen in front of us today, though, are not part of the SBA yet. We hope to confirm them very soon, but we have made the request, Senator Markey, and hopefully we will have a DOGE briefing soon for the Committee members.

But I would like to now take a minute to introduce both of our nominees. And first we will start with Mr. William Briggs, who is the nominee for Deputy Administrator of the SBA. Originally from New York, Mr. Briggs currently lives in Austin, Texas, where he acts as the Director of Regulatory and Federal Advocacy for the Independent Bankers Association of Texas.

Previously, he served as the Acting Associate Administrator in the SBA's Office of Capital Access and was instrumental in the rollout of PPP during the first Trump administration. Mr. Briggs also served as the Director for the Office of Public Outreach in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under President George W. Bush. Additionally, Mr. Briggs has owned two small business consulting firms. Mr. Briggs received his undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan.

And next, we have Dr. Casey Mulligan, who is the nominee for Chief Counsel for Advocacy. Dr. Mulligan grew up in Illinois, and is currently a professor at the University of Chicago, specializing in labor economics, public policy, and the impacts of regulation on economic behavior.

During the prior Trump administration, he served as Chief Economist for the White House Council of Economic Advisors, where he played a key role in important policy discussions. Dr. Mulligan also owns two small businesses focusing on consulting and economic research. Dr. Mulligan received his Bachelor of Arts from Harvard University, and earned his PhD in economics from the University of Chicago. Again, we thank both nominees' families and friends for being here today.

Now, Mr. Briggs and Dr. Mulligan, if you would both rise, please. It is the tradition of our Committee to swear in our nominees. So, please raise your right hand and answer the following questions. Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. Briggs. I do.

Dr. Mulligan. I do.

Chair. Should you be confirmed as Deputy Administrator of the SBA and Chief Counsel for Advocacy at SBA, are you willing to appear and testify before any duly constituted Committee of Congress when requested to do so?

Mr. Briggs. Yes.

Dr. Mulligan. Yes.

Chair. Are you willing to provide such information as is requested by any such Committee?

Mr. Briggs. Yes.

Dr. Mulligan. Yes.

Chair. Yes. Thank you, both, very much. You may take your seats. So, very briefly, I'd like to take a moment to explain our lighting system that is right in front of you. There are three lights. Green means go, yellow means you're running out of time, and red means to go ahead and wrap up your remarks. And I ask unanimous consent that the nominees' full statements be included in the record. Without objection, so ordered.

As your written testimony has been made part of the record, the Committee asks that you limit your oral remarks to five minutes. Mr. Briggs, you are now recognized for five minutes for your testimony.

TESTIMONY OF MR. WILLIAM BRIGGS OF TEXAS

Mr. Briggs. Thank you, Chair, and thank you Ranking Member Markey, and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Bill Briggs, and it is a great honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee for Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

I'm grateful the President Trump for offering me the opportunity to again serve America's 34 million small businesses, which are the backbone of our economy, the lifeblood of our communities, and the engine of innovation prosperity. As goes small business in this country, so goes our nation. I'd like to briefly acknowledge my friends and family are here today, including my parents, Bill and Dodie.

I would also like to thank Administrator Loeffler for her support. There's no stronger advocate for American small businesses, and already SBA is seeing a restoration under her leadership. Finally, I want to thank God for everything, especially the challenges which make me rely on Him.

During President Trump's first term, our nation's economy was the envy of the world. Job creators and job seekers alike were empowered, driving small business formation in a blue-collar boom through historic tax cuts, fair trade deals, and deregulation. His agenda had created 7 million new jobs, delivered his historically low poverty and record employment for minority communities. Indeed, small business optimism has surged since the November election because America's entrepreneurs know help is on the way.

If confirmed, this will be my third time as a Presidential appointee, and Administrator Loeffler will be the fourth cabinet-level administrator that I will have had the opportunity to serve. During my prior service at SBA, I oversaw the day-to-day operations of the Paycheck Protection Program, which helped to save 11 million small business jobs. I hope to leverage a wealth of institutional knowledge and lessons that will enable me to hit the ground running, if confirmed.

I bring to the role over two decades of public service and private sector experience. My first job out of college was in state government, working on veterans' affairs and local economic development issues. From there, I've served in senior roles at industry, trade associations interspersed with two Presidential appointments.

During the last Trump administration, I served as the Acting Associate Administrator in the Office of Capital Access, where I oversaw all SBA lending programs. I also served as an advisor to the Administrator on engaging small businesses during this crucial time in the agency's history. Finally, I led internal agency reform efforts, including the SBA field alignment and rebranding initiatives launched under then Administrator, Linda McMahon.

Like many Americans, my belief in the power of small business is personal. My family is steeped in service to our country as much as the spirit of entrepreneurship. Both of my grandfathers served in World War II, and my mother, who's here today, was an Army nurse. And two of my brothers served overseas in our armed forces. Two of my sisters currently run a small business today, and I have owned and operated two small businesses myself.

My sister Katie owns a small landscape design company and often shares how excessive regulations, including extensive environmental permits, take up her time, drive up her equipment costs, and hamper her ability to serve her clients. She's forced to either cut back on employees, reduce her services, or cut into her own bottom line. Her story is the story of millions of small businesses who have been put under the enormous strain over the last four years with excessive regulation, crushing inflation, and big government bureaucracy.

Our private sector hiring, though beginning to recover under President Trump, has declined for over a year. And if we are to bring back jobs and ensure that the economy continues to grow, we must first unshackle and support free enterprise. One of the ways to do that is to ensure that SBA is effectively serving small business by cutting regulation, eliminating fraud and waste, streamlining and modernizing services, and refocusing the agency on its core missions of helping entrepreneurs thrive.

With the America First agenda, we are poised to unlock a new era of growth and opportunity for the risk-takers, job creators, and innovators who power this nation's economy. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting President Trump and Administrator Loeffler to ensure SBA programs deliver results, real results, for Main Street and all of America.

Chair Ernst, Ranking Member Markey, and members of the Committee, thank you for your dedication to U.S. small businesses. I welcome your questions, and would be honored to earn your support to serve as the next Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Briggs follows.]

[GRAPHIC(S) NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

Chair. Thank you, Mr. Briggs. And Dr. Mulligan, you are now recognized for five minutes for your testimony.

TESTIMONY OF DR. CASEY MULLIGAN OF ILLINOIS

Dr. Mulligan. Chair Ernst, Ranking Member Markey, distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My wife, Julia, and three of our children, have joined us to witness part of the system of checks and balances. I appreciate their support and sacrifices, as Dad served and hopes to serve again.

I'm grateful and honored by President Trump's nomination for the Chief Counsel position of the Office of Advocacy at the SBA and to join the President's team committed to replacing government overreach with common-sense leadership.

I have always lived in Illinois, with the exception of five years living in the Ranking Member's state, and one year here in Washington. After I was about three years old, my parents' sole source of income was the small software business that my father founded and managed with a partner. My uncle also worked most of his career at that business. My mother and I worked there at times.

In my current capacity as the owner of small businesses, I am too familiar with uncompromising regulators. Agencies can shutter businesses or short of that, cause them to throw up their hands in exasperation and sell out to a big corporation.

I file at least 10 payroll tax forms every year. It seems like as soon as one is mailed out, the IRS is asking for another with a check attached, of course. I got one of my biggest accounting bills ever a few months ago to comply with Treasury's beneficial ownership interest requirements. Considering the relief that President Trump just delivered on that, maybe it wasn't necessary, but at the time, the Treasury was threatening all of us small businesses with monetary and criminal penalties.

Much of my career has challenged regulatory overreach and uncovered unnecessarily onerous rules. One of my early projects was commissioned by family farmers in central Illinois. They needed to look at the economic effects of eminent domain because the state was using that authority for private purposes. I testified about that at the Illinois Commerce Commission.

My late father-in-law started an oyster farm, now run by our nephew. Uncompromising regulators loom even larger there, always shifting attention away from the shellfish and toward the customers by hiring lawyers and experts. Once, the farm had to prove that the regulators don't know how to measure nitrogen. Another time, it was to refute the government's false claim that the land under the water is not our land.

I strongly support Congress's approach of creating an independent Office of Advocacy and other elements of Regulatory Flexibility Act to ensure that concerns of and costs imposed on small businesses receive meaningful weight in regulatory decisions.

While the RFA exists on paper, too often small businesses are getting ambushed. Too many rules are imposed without engaging or even notifying them. The RFA has rules for regulators to follow, but often, their attitude is ``Rules for thee, but not for me''.

President Trump does not tolerate two-tiered systems. The law requires keeping businesses in the loop. It requires reviewing the old rules for their effect on small businesses. Agency compliance with the RFA does not necessarily need many resources, particularly when there is an advocacy office. They're ready to help, supported by Congress and the White House.

By ensuring that the Chief Counsel position is filled for the first time in many years, the members of this Committee can fully restore small business advocacy and RFA watchdog functions that it created in its statutes and small businesses deserve.

Small businesses also need regulatory solutions that last beyond a single presidential cycle. They appreciate that the 115th Congress and President Trump used the Congressional Review Act a record number of times, and this Congress has gotten off to an even faster start.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee and anyone else in Congress developing legislation to help agencies achieve their missions at less costs to small businesses. I also pledge to keep you apprised of the concerns expressed during the regional outreach process.

I thank the Committee for its consideration. I welcome your questions, and would be honored to earn your support to serve as the next Chief Counsel of the Office of Advocacy at the SBA.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Mulligan follows.]

[GRAPHIC(S) NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

Chair. Wonderful. Thank you, Dr. Mulligan, and Mr. Briggs, for your testimony.

Before we move to questions, the Committee has received several letters of support for Mr. Briggs and Dr. Mulligan's nominations. And I ask for unanimous consent to enter into the record letters of support.

For Mr. Briggs, letters of support from: The National Restaurant Association, Independent Community Bankers of America, National Small Business Association, National Association of Government-Guaranteed Lenders, International

Franchise Association, Texas Association of Business, Independent Bankers Association of Texas, Texas Venture Alliance, Economic and Community Development Institute, The Association of Women's Business Centers, Visiting Angels, Small Business Multi-Cloud Coalition, and U.S. Black Chambers.

For Dr. Mulligan, letters from: The National Small Business Association, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Council, International Franchise Association, a joint letter from Tom Sullivan, SBA's Chief Counsel for Advocacy from 2002 to 2008 and Winslow Sargeant, SBA's Chief Counsel for Advocacy from 2010 to 2015, and a letter from Darryl DePriest, SBA's Chief Counsel for Advocacy from 2015 to 2017.

Without objection, so ordered.

Chair. I will now recognize myself for five minutes of questions. So, we'll start with you, Mr. Briggs. During your service in the previous Trump administration, you had direct insight into the Covid EIDL and PPP. As you know, both programs have suffered from a lack of transparency and experienced over $200 billion in fraud. These same problems plague many of SBA's loan programs as I highlighted during last month's hearing on the 7(a) loan program. If confirmed, do you commit to providing the Committee with comprehensive and current information on how SBA's loan programs are performing?

Mr. Briggs. Chair Ernst, thank you for that question. I'm tremendously proud of my service, particularly with the Paycheck Protection Program and the EIDL program. I believe they did an incredible job of helping to preserve American small business jobs at the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

However, as you have noted, there is way too much fraud in these programs or was too much fraud. And part of that, particularly with PPP, some of that was statutory-mandated guardrails that had to be let down by law. But when I was Acting Associate Administrator, we implemented upfront checks that reduced a lot of that fraud.

Since that time, I understand that there have been more upfront checks and identity verification procedures introduced. However, should I be confirmed, I will continue to focus on cracking down on fraud in the current programs and have a zero-tolerance approach to fraud going forward.

Chair. Very good. I appreciate that because I am worried that the 7(a) loan program could require an appropriation if those defaults are too high without enough fee revenue to offset the losses that we have experienced. Will you commit to reviewing the loan portfolios and make necessary policy changes to avoid taxpayers footing the bill wherever that may lead, including tightening up eligibility?

Mr. Briggs. Thank you, Chair Ernst. Yes. The 7(a) program right now is cashflow for the negative for the first time in 12 years. It was noted in the hearing three weeks ago. It's a serious problem and one that ultimately ends up hurting access to credit for all small businesses. I'll work with Administrator Loeffler, the Associate Administrator of Capital Access, and all of the relevant SBA staff to make sure that we're doing everything we can to put that program back to its historical position of being having a neutral subsidy where the taxpayers aren't taxed to run the program.

Chair. Very good. No, thank you. And what, in your experience, were the pitfalls of SBA's Covid programs.

Mr. Briggs. Chair, the I've spent the last four years thinking about lessons learned from that experience. It was an unprecedented time, as every member of this Committee knows. And as Ranking Member Markey did know, we did come together to work on this at a perilous time in our nation's history.

I would say the first thing is not to shut down the entire economy and then hope that something like SBA can solve the problem. I think that if that situation will ever happen again, hopefully we do have more forethought. I also think that something, again, like upfront identity checks and verification. And also, being much more clear about eligibility guidelines going forward are all things we really need to do in both our capital access and disaster loan programs.

Chair. Right. Very good. I appreciate that. And we'll go to Dr. Mulligan next. And as I've noted Dr. Mulligan, under the prior administration, small businesses across the country were burdened with a $1.8 trillion regulatory onslaught, and over 350 million hours of paperwork.

While the Regulatory Flexibility Act requires agencies to consider how their regulations impact small businesses and look to evaluate less burdensome alternatives, agencies have not followed the law. So, I did re-introduce the PROVE IT Act to require that agencies evaluate the true cost of regulations and to empower Advocacy's role to make an agency prove the regulation is necessary, and mitigate against cost and compliance burdens for small businesses.

Do you support increasing transparency and accuracy in the cost to benefit analysis aspect of SBA's rulemaking process?

Dr. Mulligan. Absolutely.

Chair. Easy. Do you agree agencies have failed to properly consider the indirect costs of their regulations?

Dr. Mulligan. Almost all of them that I've looked at have been pretty weak on considering those costs.

Chair. If confirmed as the Chief Counsel for Advocacy, will you commit to properly evaluating agency rulemaking for both its direct and indirect impact on small businesses?

Dr. Mulligan. I commit to do that.

Chair. Thank you. And you supportive of the PROVE IT Act?

Dr. Mulligan. Yes, I support the PROVE IT Act.

Chair. And right on time. My time is expired. Ranking Member Markey.

Senator Markey. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Dr. Mulligan, the Office of Advocacy sits within the SBA, but the chief counsel is statutorily independent from the SBA administrator. And your work is by statute not permitted to be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget, or to any other federal agency, or any executive office. That includes, again, OMB. You can't share information with OMB. You expressed to my staff that you take that independence seriously.

However, we know that Elon Musk's minions have already had conversations with leadership at the Office of Advocacy. Can you commit to the committee that you will refuse to take instruction from DOGE or from the administration so that you are in compliance with the statutory mandate?

Dr. Mulligan. Thank you for your question, Senator. I support President Trump's goal of making government more efficient. He wanted a mandate in the election to do exactly that. If you look----

Senator Markey. But he did not win a mandate to violate statutes. He said he was going to follow the law. So, the law says that you cannot share information. Are you going to abide by that law?

Dr. Mulligan. If you look at Advocacy's charter statute and how it's changed over time, it's clear that, number one, Advocacy has a special hiring authority, as you said. And number two, as you said, the authority lies with the Chief Counsel.

Senator Markey. So, again, I'm going to read you the statute again. Your work is by statute not permitted to be submitted, ``to the Office of Management and Budget, or to any other federal agency, or any executive office.'' Do you agree to abide by that law? Will you abide by that law?

Dr. Mulligan. Yeah. And all the statutes related to the office. I will abide by the----

Senator Markey. So, you will not share that information with any other agency? Is that what you're saying?

Dr. Mulligan. That's correct. The reports are supposed, according to statute, and would be my practice, submitted to the Congress and to the President.

Senator Markey. Okay. What do you believe is your role in ensuring that congressional mandates are followed regardless of executive directives? Do congressional mandates take primacy if they're there as the abiding law?

Dr. Mulligan. Thank you for your question. I'm not sure I understand the question. Are you referring to Executive Orders?

Senator Markey. The question is, do you believe that statutes that have been put on the books by House and Senate votes and signed by Presidents take precedence over executive directives?

Dr. Mulligan. I'm confused by the question because I even--I served in the first Trump administration, and I've followed the second one and there are lots of Executive Orders. Every single one I've looked at, the primary instruction in those Executive Orders is for the people reading it to follow the laws of the United States.

Senator Markey. Right. So, you are saying that if there is a statute, that you will abide by that statute and not allow for an executive order?

Dr. Mulligan. Yes, I would do that. And I would expect, as President Trump has done almost 300 times in the past, to tell me to follow the laws of the United States.

Senator Markey. All right. Well so you do believe statutes then are at a higher order than executive orders in terms of what you must obey?

Dr. Mulligan. I'm confused because the Executive Orders themselves say to follow the laws of the United States. So, I don't see the conflict.

Senator Markey. All right. Well, sometimes, Presidents when they're making executive orders believe that they're the law, even though there's a statute which is very clear as to what the law is. So, that's the point that I'm making to you. And I will be holding you to that standard.

Will you use loyalty tests, Mr. Mulligan, or any other criteria unrelated to an employee's work product when making hiring or firing decisions?

Dr. Mulligan. Thank you for your question. The Advocacy Officers were created, and if I were confirmed would be my goal as well, to be an independent voice for small business in Washington. So, the hiring decisions, procurement decisions, all the decisions will be around how can we better be an independent voice for small business with the agencies here in Washington.

Senator Markey. Okay. And have you met with the team at Advocacy yet?

Dr. Mulligan. I have not been in the building. They have a--I think we call it a Sherpa, who's helped me find my way to your office and the different Senator's offices for the meetings. But I have not met the staff yet.

Senator Markey. We've heard stories of specific industries meeting at Mar-a-Lago and getting special treatment from the administration. Do you agree that that creates market distortions when special treatment is handed out and it's not an even-handed application of the law?

Dr. Mulligan. I'm a little confused by the question. I haven't been to Mar-a-Lago. I'm not sure what businesses are going there, what conversations are had. I'd be glad to look in detail at what you're referring to. But in the abstract, I don't really understand the question.

Senator Markey. Well, it's very clear that if someone visits Mar-a-Lago, and then the President says give special treatment to one particular company, that would obviously begin to create a market distortion because it would not be an equal application of the law that the SBA is supposed to be discharging.

Dr. Mulligan. I'm also confused by that. I apologize. I'm confused by that question, too, because you gave legal terms in there and then economic terms like market distortion. I'm not quite sure the connection. I'm not a lawyer. I do understand the idea of market distortions. I've read many, many articles about market distortions. I'm not quite how sure how they apply in the situation you're describing.

Senator Markey. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator Husted [presiding]. Thank you, Ranking Member Markey. So, I'm going to recognize myself now as the acting Chair on behalf of Chair Ernst for five minutes to ask a few questions.

I want to start with this, you know, the Small Business Administration. I'll start with you, Mr. Briggs. And by the way, I hold no grudge to the fact that you're a Michigan grad as a Senator from Ohio. I remember asking a college president one time about this university that he was running, and I said can you tell me what the three things that you're really good at? And he told me five things at the university, maybe six things that the university was really good at. And I said, well, what are some of the things that you're maybe not really good at that maybe you shouldn't be doing anymore? And he couldn't come up with a one, right?

Well, we do everything really well. Well, nobody, no institution is great at everything. And there's some things that they've discovered over time that they have great value in. And then there are things that maybe they say, well, you know, maybe we ought not do that anymore. Maybe there's something better that we could do with those resources.

So, based on your experience and your knowledge of the agency, reflecting on the nature of that question, what is it that the SBA does that's great, and what might we rethink, prioritizing resources around that we could do better?

Mr. Briggs. Senator, thank you for your question. And I do accept that Ohio State won the National Football Championship. [Laughter.]

Mr. Briggs. Here's what SBA does well, and what the focus, if I'm confirmed, is going to be; doing its core mission well, what I call the three C's and D. Access to capital, contracting, and counseling small businesses to grow. The other important feature of that is the disaster function. And we've been there as we were five years ago during the Covid pandemic, but to make sure we're also there now when disaster strikes across the country. Those are things that the agency can and should do well and will be the focus, should I be the Deputy Administrator.

The things the agency does not do well are things like direct lending, voter registration efforts, and picking winners and losers. That should not be the focus of the agency when it comes to its programs and policies, but rather ensuring that all of those four core missions that I described are available and accessible to all Americans.

Senator Husted. So, on the final point of the things that it doesn't do well, is it required to do that in statute anywhere?

Mr. Briggs. Senator, I actually have been reading the Small Business Act at night because I haven't been able to sleep in advance of this hearing. I can't find that. I do think there are programs in the government contracting area that work with socially disadvantaged, but that's a separate thing from what we historically are now referred to as DEI programs. I'm not aware of that.

Senator Husted. So, I would assume then with the Administrator's support that you will no longer be doing those things that the agency in the past has been doing, but has no statutory responsibility to accomplish.

Mr. Briggs. Senator, if I'm confirmed, I will follow the law and focus on the core agency missions of access to capital, contracting, counseling, and disaster response.

Senator Husted. Okay, great. Mr. Mulligan, do you have thoughts on any of those questions?

Dr. Mulligan. Thank you for your question. The Advocacy office is a fairly small office. About 50 people. Has a fairly tight range of responsibilities that Congress has signed to it. And as far as I can tell, they've been executing those responsibilities and not going outside those boundaries.

Mr. Briggs. Great.

Senator Husted. Thank you. Mr. Briggs, just another thought. Part of my previous responsibilities before becoming a U.S. Senator, I was very involved in economic development and supporting entrepreneurs through venture funds, and securing IP, and things like that for entrepreneurial ventures.

I've rarely bumped into an entrepreneur who's told me that they need the government involvement in much of what they do. They normally talk about the things that government does that are in conflict with what entrepreneurs want to do.

And so, in your experience with small businesses and entrepreneurs, what are the things that they most note about the fact? Because you're a government agency designed to help businesses, yet most businesses will complain about government standing its way. What are some of the things that you've encountered that businesses most commonly tell you, particularly small businesses, that are problematic for them?

Mr. Briggs. Senator, over the last four years, I've worked and counseled everything from venture-backed startups to what we would call mom-and-pop shops. And almost across the board, they're not aware of the breadth and depth of regulations that they have to follow, that they had no idea about.

And especially with venture backed businesses, particularly in the financial technology arena, the amount of regulation just to get to a minimum viable product is unprecedented. And they just don't even understand sometimes what to do regardless of the great resources that SBA can provide, including counseling or access to capital.

Senator Husted. So, one of the things I think this committee would find of value is that as you are out there with counselors and capital and talking with small businesses, if you could compile a list for us of the kinds of common concerns that businesses are identifying that they could use relief. That actually, we don't need government money, we don't need government help, we need government relief, relief from those regulations, relief from the things that get in their way. And I think one of the things would be very valuable, at least I would think it would be of value to me, is for SBA to identify those things that are commonly discussed by the businesses that you're trying to help as impediments to their success.

So, instead of all the things that government can do for people, how about the things that government can stop doing to them that stand in the way of their success? And would you. Would you commit to working to accomplish that?

Mr. Briggs. Senator, I will commit to working with that, particularly with SBA's Office of the Ombudsman.

Senator Husted. Great. Thank you. Now I would like to recognize Senator Cantwell for five minutes.

Senator Cantwell. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you so much. Welcome to the nominees for your positions. And I know that you probably have given a statement that I haven't been able to read yet, so we'll look at that.

But I wanted to ask you about this pressing issue on tariffs. First, Dr. Mulligan, do you think that the President's tariff first approach is helpful to small business? Can you describe the impact of tariffs on Mexico and Canada, two of our largest trading partners, what you think that would have on small businesses?

Dr. Mulligan. Thank you for your question. It is good to see you again. Trade policy absolutely must consider the concerns of small businesses, and Congress created an independent office to advocate for them. President Trump, more than any President in U.S. history, has prioritized getting that Chief Counsel position filled. If it goes unfilled too long, we could be in a position where it's mainly the big companies that are heard around trade policy rather than the small ones.

Senator Cantwell. Okay. Did you have--oh, so you think, in general, because there's less flexibility of maneuvering, you're saying it could be a bigger concern?

Dr. Mulligan. And also, that their voice in Washington is weak without having an office like Advocacy at full capacity and full efficiency.

Senator Cantwell. And what do you think that we should be doing to communicate about the impact of, of tariffs on those small businesses?

Dr. Mulligan. One thing very important, maybe the primary thing that the Office of Advocacy does, is go out to the small businesses where they are. They don't require them to know what phone number to call or where, where to visit in Washington, what door and what elevator to use. Go out to them. Often, sometimes in virtual mode as well, especially for the rural. And listen, just listen, write down and come back to the makers of the policy, which trade policy or other agencies, and tell them, hey, here's the concerns that we heard from our businesses. And the RFA requires you to consider those concerns when you make your policy decision.

Senator Cantwell. Thank you. Mr. Briggs, do you have any comments?

Mr. Briggs. Thank you, Senator Cantwell for the question. I just would note that from my understanding of the tariff proposal, part of that is to bring back onshore manufacturing to this company country. We've seen some initial indicators based on employment numbers that 11,000 manufacturing jobs in the last or the previous month were started. I do think that this is part of a larger effort to ultimately do that to bring back manufacturing to the country.

Senator Cantwell. Well, I definitely agree with you on the manufacturing jobs, and I would say to my colleague from Ohio, who was ablely chairing the meeting, that I'm very concerned because I think that we have brought back jobs in manufacturing, jobs into the United States because of the CHIPS and Science Act.

So, the President right now, it's a different story, but is saying, you know, maybe he wants to get rid of that. I would say for places like Ohio, and Arizona, and Texas, it has absolutely brought manufacturing back. And in the State of Washington, it's brought manufacturing back. Why we should care is because manufacturing jobs help people go from working class to middle class because they're good paying jobs, and they help small businesses in that region help build an ecosystem.

So, I do think the President's statement that somehow, he could have gotten the semiconductor industry to come back and manufacture in the United States by tariffs. I don't agree with that. We may have a philosophical difference there. But the point is that I hear so many people saying that we haven't grown manufacturing jobs in the Biden administration because of those policies did grow manufacturing jobs. So, now the question is how do we could put pedal to the metal and keep growing it?

And one of the things that I think a lot of people have been discussing is how can the policies of the small business in this administration with access to capital and targeting some of these supply chain issues, give the American economy a leg up. So, for example, in my state, we have a lot of--three different fusion companies. Now we'll see if fusion technology is really here today, Senator Risch and I chair a Fusion Caucus. Well, it's a group that's made recommendations to the United States about how we would accelerate.

But when you think about CHIPS and Science, it's about let's get the test bedding done, let's get the next generation done, and then let's make sure we have the supply chain to accelerate. And if we can just accelerate now, whether it's Fusion or something else, let's start working with our supply chains and small businesses so that they are providing those products here in the United States. And so, I just want to--do you think that's a smart strategy?

Mr. Briggs. Senator, thank you for your question. And I assume you're addressing me not Dr. Mulligan?

Senator Cantwell. Yes. Because of your deputy administrator.

Mr. Briggs. Yeah. I generally support your remarks that manufacturing can start a small business ecosystem. My focus, if I'm confirmed, is to help bring back that manufacturing renaissance, but also to make sure that SBA's core programs function as best as possible to serve those small businesses that might come about from a manufacturing renaissance under the Trump administration.

Senator Cantwell. Yeah. My statement was just a little different. It said that the test bedding of next generation technology, the CHIPS and Science Act, is about speeding up the advancement of technology to happen faster than it normally would because these big companies or large organizations may not have the money to do the kind of research, to do the actual test betting. But once the test bedding's done, it's like we're off to the races. Okay, now, how do we continue to lead?

And I think it's not that manufacturing would draw the supply chain or this, you know, eco it is what could SBA do to help build, help build that and be cognizant of those opportunities. And so, I do think that when you think about the AI situation--oh, my gosh, my time's almost over, Madam Chair. So, but you think about what happened with chat GPT, here we go. We basically demonstrated a major milestone that that happened in AI. And then, immediately, China goes and tries to knock off one aspect of that on how to do it in a cheaper fashion.

So, I think hand in hand with being the leaders in technology and innovation is then how do we continue to lead on the small business and supply chain side of getting those products and resources there so that ecosystem can be more aggressively grown. I do think that our great prowess as a nation is to outpace other countries on the R&D and implementation.

So, anyway, thank you so much. I will have some more questions for the record, but thank you so much.

Chair [presiding]. Thank you, Senator Cantwell.

And I'll do a second round of questions. And I do know that Ranking Member Markey will be back and have additional questions as well as a closing statement. So, we'll go back to Mr. Briggs. Last year, SBA failed to alert or provide the Committee with any information before the agency ran out of funding for its disaster assistance program.

Administrator Loeffler committed to ensuring Congress has transparent and timely information from SBA during her confirmation hearing. Can you additionally confirm that SBA will keep Congress informed of any changes in SBA's disaster program or any potential shortfalls?

Mr. Briggs. Chair, thanks for the question. Yes, in all of my previous times as a Presidential appointee, especially during Covid, I saw it as part of my job to keep Congress informed, especially this Committee.

Chair. Very good, thank you. Under the Biden administration, a myriad of changes to the disaster program went into place, likely exacerbating the problems that led to the program shortfall last fall. As someone with experience leading the Office of Capital Access, how will you ensure that the disaster loan program is properly managed during your time as SBA Deputy Administrator?

Mr. Briggs. Madam Chair, thank you for the question. As you said, I did oversee the Office of Capital Access. After I left, there was a little bit of that merging with the old Office of Disaster. And so now the systems are somewhat merged. I think one of two things I would first immediately do is work with the current AA or Associate Administrator of the Office of Capital Access to understand, especially over the last eight weeks, what has been done, but also to work with our new CFO.

This is, in my opinion, basic blocking and tackling that we have to make sure there's enough money because we know disasters are coming. It's inexcusable. We don't know when. But Covid taught us one thing, think of the worst, and then double it, or triple it, or ten times it. And so, if I'm confirmed, that will be my focus to work with both the CFO's office and the Office of Capital Access on the disaster program.

Chair. So, you've given a very good overview. You are committing to ensure that a shortfall never happens again. Is that correct?

Mr. Briggs. Yes, Senator.

Chair. Okay. Thank you very much. And I've got two and a half minutes remaining. So, let's go to, again, Mr. Briggs. We'll talk a little bit about disaster field training. Iowa experiences our fair share of disasters. We've seen derechos, tornadoes, you name it. Just last week, Iowans experienced a powerful blizzard that left thousands without power. And now we are about to go into that tornado season.

In disasters, aftermath, there's a lot of folks that are at their most vulnerable, and it's, it's something that's very tragic. They're doing their best to pick up the pieces of their lives that have been destroyed by something completely out of their control. Disappointingly, though we have heard repeated reports over the years of SBA field staff showing poor customer service to the disaster victims who come to them for help.

Victims have been profiled, made to feel SBA cannot do anything for them, and even left with completely incorrect information. This happened in Iowa. This is unacceptable and it must be changed. As SBA Deputy Administrator, how will you help ensure SBA disaster field staff will be properly trained and equipped to help disaster victims access SBA assistance

Mr. Briggs. Chair, thank you for that question. It's inexcusable when situations happen like that and people are at their most vulnerable. When I served in the prior administration, one of the initiatives I undertook was the

Field Lineman Initiative to ensure that there was consistent customer service across the country.

So, the customer service that small businesses got in Iowa was the same they would've gotten in Massachusetts. This is the sort of thing that I take great pride in working with the Office of Field Operations. I believe the associate administrator from there is from Iowa. And so, we'll work to address that as quick as possible, but people really need the SBA during disasters that was made abundantly clear to me during my prior term and will be a key focus of mine getting the disaster thing right going forward.

Chair. Thank you so much. I appreciate that commitment. And then, if--do we have Senator Markey coming back? I think we have one more Senator coming, and then we'll go back to Senator Markey.

But a little bit about our experience in Iowa. Last year, during the tornado season, we saw a number of our very small communities that have been wiped out by those disasters. In one case, 60 percent of the homes and businesses in one town was gone after a tornado, and my own staff was on ground to assist those people that had been impacted by the tornado.

And the SBA field staff had provided inaccurate, incomplete, absolutely wrong information, and actually provided them a handout with a website that had been dead for heaven knows how long. So, that's why it's so important. We have got to provide people with accurate information when they are most vulnerable.

And Mr. Justice is getting situated. So, Senator, if you're ready to proceed with some questions, we've had some great dialogue today. You're recognized.

Senator Justice. Madam Chairman, thank you so much. And thank both of these wonderful young men that I've had the opportunity to talk to and be with. And I really appreciate both that I can tell you just this from Jim Justice's standpoint. Jim Justice is a business guy. He's not a politician. You know, I'm a small business guy, and I have had dialogue with both these individuals and we are blessed. We are just flat blessed to have them both.

Mr. Briggs was here before, and you bring so much to the table. And Mr. Mulligan, I am just so impressed with you. It's off the chart. So, with all that being said, I've got a couple questions that are kind of bland in themselves, but I would just tell you first and foremost that you can't fathom in West Virginia how important our small businesses are.

But we really can't fathom all across this nation. Absolutely. The guts, the absolute everything we have in this nation starts with our small businesses. And so, with all that being said, again, we have two guys here, two gentlemen that are going to lead us, and they're going to knock it flat out of the park. And I promise you that.

And so, if I could ask this question real quick, Mr. Briggs. You've been there before, and my question reads, can you tell us today how your prior experience at SBA is going to be serve you the very best and serve all of us at the highest level?

Mr. Briggs. Thank you, Senator, for that question. During the first term, I had the privilege to travel your state three times on Office of Capital Access Business. I'm a big fan of West Virginia.

Senator Justice. And you loved it, didn't you?

Mr. Briggs. I loved it, yeah.

Senator Justice. Now, we're talking.

Mr. Briggs. We were doing that during the rural initiatives. One of the things that we did, sir, I served at the SBA, probably the most crucial time in the agency's history outside of its founding, and it was stretched to its limit. And so, from that kind of experience, or battlefield experience, as it were, you just learn things you would otherwise never learn. You understand it, you quickly, intuitively understand how the agency works and what's needs to be done.

In addition to that kind of insider knowledge of how it works, I also bring these tremendous external relationships formed during that era, and a willingness to work with the Committee on both sides, particularly as it comes to disaster response and related issues to better serve American small businesses.

Senator Justice. I believe that. I believe every part. And absolutely not only do I believe, but all of us will hold you to that, too. And I think we'll hold you to that very proudly.

And if I could go to Mr. Mulligan just real quick and just say, just this, West Virginia, I just spoke just a second ago, I had the great opportunity to be the Governor of West Virginia for eight years. Now, just think about this. I've said this over and over and over. What is my number one responsibility when I was the Governor? My number one responsibility. You know, you may think, well, take care of the people. You know, absolutely be there when things get really tough on them and everything and all those things are true. Absolutely. Make sure we're safe. All those things are true.

But the number one thing that I felt was get the economics right. Make sure the economics were right, because if the economics were right, then you can do so much for so many. And if the economics are upside down, and believe me, when I walked in the door, and I don't say this braggadociously, but West Virginia was bankrupt. That's all there is to it.

And all of a sudden, we got it really, really, really cooking. And at the end of the day, we'd have never got it really cooking if it hadn't have been for great people like you and absolutely all the support of SBA, all across the planet in West Virginia. So, Mr. Mulligan, understanding all that and understanding absolutely how vital our economy is, tell us, tell me just a couple of things about how you would support our rural economy and absolutely in every way.

Dr. Mulligan. Thank you for your question. I was glad to be in your office and share with you the priorities that I have for the Office of Advocacy, if I'm confirmed. And the rural small businesses are something that the office is well situated to serve and listen to. Really, it's listening exercise and coming back and communicating.

So, the office has been, historically it's been to West Virginia to visit the small businesses where they are. There was a line business there. They recently visited with the farmers. We have the opportunity to go out and meet them also virtual meetings. And the whole point is to listen and then come back to Washington. In Washington, they have authority. But not knowledge and relay, Hey, the small business in West Virginia, they have these concerns and you really need to take them to account before you make your policies.

Senator Justice. Well, let me just add one comment. You're splitting the bullseye on one thing. You know, I'm a real believer, of if you want to know what's going on with your business, you got to get you got to get out there and get dirty and get right with the people. You know, that's all there is to it. And literally, I hear you in every way. And that is a terrific answer to me. Madam Chairman, thank you so much.

Chair. You bet. Thank you, Senator Justice. We'll go now to five minutes to Senator Hickenlooper. Thank you.

Senator Hickenlooper. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you both for being here, Mr. Briggs, Mr. Mulligan. Appreciate your willingness to enter service.

I'll start with you, Mr. Briggs. Congress created the SBA in the law so that it could promote access to capital for small businesses. When I was governor in a different lifetime, we did what we call the bottom-up economic development plan. But one of the five main things that literally every part of the state said is we need better access to capital. And I think that's why Congress appropriates money to SBA programs is we get access to capital.

In the last few months, we've seen the President administration try to defy Congress and restrain those funds again against frozen money that Congress appropriated and really tried to shut down whole agencies that we had created through law. And I just am worried that that funding for small business is going to disappear for if we're not on top of it. So, I want to make sure that you're willing to do everything you can to running the SBA in line with the law including appropriations as Congress intended.

Mr. Briggs. Senator Hickenlooper, thank you for the question. If confirmed by the Senate, I will uphold the law in a fair and impartial manner.

Senator Hickenlooper. Okay. Well, I'll take that as a yes then. Mr. Mulligan, small business owners often face a range of challenges and barriers and stuff until you've done it. I mean, it took me almost two years to raise the money to open my first restaurant.

But those barriers change over time. They evolve and I think it's important that we stay on top of this evolving small business landscape and make sure that we're understanding that trends like AI changes in the lending market that we're on, that we're recognizing how they affect entrepreneurs, how they change the access to capital.

So, in your view, what developments in the small business environment should we be focusing on trying to understand better? How would you use the Office of Advocacy to make sure that Congress and the SBA stay informed?

Dr. Mulligan. Thank you for your question. I agree with you, 100 percent. The small business economy changes pretty fast, and it's been changing fast in recent times, and that means the data we had before is obsolete, and you really want to get access to new data that reflects the current situation.

You mentioned AI. I think it's a factor. Different types of employment relationships are evolving over time. And one of the great things about the Office of Advocacy is even before there was a Regulatory Flexibility Act, Congress understood that this issue of measurement, and they created the office to have an Office of Economic Research and do measurement.

I think a lot of the members even to this day are relying on the small business numbers that come from the office. And it would be a huge priority, not just because I've been an economic researcher for so many years, but be a huge priority for me to make sure the statistics are the best and up to date and reflect the current situation.

Senator Hickenlooper. I could not agree more. I think that I tell my staff all the time is information is power. And the more we share that power with where people can put it to use like small business entrepreneurs the better off we are.

Mr. Briggs small businesses in Indian country face unique challenges, and that's no surprise. The landscape is in many cases more challenging in a variety of ways. Last Congress, we worked with Senators on both sides of the aisle to create bill that would codify the SBAs office of Native American Affairs. That bill came out of this committee with 18 to 1 vote.

If you're confirmed, are you willing to commit to doing everything you can or to aggressively try to make sure that the Office of Native American Affairs has the resources it needs to try and support Indian entrepreneurs who oftentimes have far more difficult access to capital than anyone else?

Mr. Briggs. Senator, thank you for the question. I'm aware of the challenges facing the Native American community. My sister lives in New Mexico and has worked on a reservation in Taos, New Mexico, and has told me of the challenges facing that particular community. I commit to certainly looking at this legislation and working with your office and the full Committee on this issue as part of if I'm confirmed by the Senate.

Senator Hickenlooper. Right. Well, I appreciate that. I think in so many ways, the SBA is that bastion, that place where entrepreneurs can turn. With all due respect, to the SBA, you have to have a little bit of capital, a little bit of momentum before the SBA will even answer your call. But once you get to that point, the SBA can provide solutions and resources to people that when they get that access. And I remember when we first got our 7(a) loan and it transformed our business in ways that, I mean, would take hours to explain.

So, anyway, I tremendously respect both of you for your effort to come and help small businesses. They are without question the core of our economy. Thank you. I yield back to the chair.

Chair. Thank you very much, Senator Hickenlooper. And that will conclude our questions. If there are no further questions, I want to thank Mr. Briggs and Dr. Mulligan for being here with us today and for your willingness to serve. We do appreciate it.

We are going to leave the record open for two days until 5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 14th, for the members to submit questions for the record. And we will keep the record open for two weeks to edit statements, and submit letters and any other relevant materials.

Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. Briggs and Dr. Mulligan, we would appreciate your prompt response to any questions submitted for the record. We do require your responses prior to advancing your nominations out of the Committee. And with that, the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:51 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

[GRAPHIC(S) NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

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