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## **ACTING ARCHITECT AND SBA ADMINISTRATOR SIGN AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAMS AT AOC**

WASHINGTON – Stephen T. Ayers, AIA, LEED AP, Acting Architect of the Capitol, and Karen Mills, Administrator of the Small Business Administration, have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to establish the roles and responsibilities of each agency in the implementation of the use of small business programs at the Office of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC).

Under Mr. Ayers' leadership, the AOC has implemented several programs to actively award contracts to companies that reflect the diversity of our country above and beyond the standard requirements of Federal regulations.

Specifically, the AOC is a Legislative Branch agency, and therefore, is not required to utilize small business programs under the Small Business Act, 15 USC §631 et seq., which is under the authority of the Small Business Administration (SBA). The MOU, while preserving the separation of powers between the Legislative and Executive branches, establishes the support activities, roles, and responsibilities necessary for the AOC to fully utilize small businesses, identified under the Act and the SBA's regulations, to the maximum extent practicable when awarding small purchase contracts.

In addition, the SBA's subject matter expertise will be used to further strengthen, expand, and foster contracting opportunities for small businesses.

Mr. Ayers, upon signing the agreement document said, "The AOC is leading the way in the Legislative Branch in encouraging small disadvantaged and women-owned businesses to effectively compete for AOC contracts. This increased competition ensures we receive the best value for taxpayers' dollars while supporting employment opportunities and businesses in our community."

"It is appropriate that America's small businesses are part of the lifeblood of the Capitol. After all, small businesses have built this country, and they will continue to provide the products and services that America needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We look forward to working with the AOC to maximize the opportunities available to small businesses through the terms of this agreement," said Ms. Mills.

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The MOU is effective for three years and is just one of the AOC's efforts to encourage small business participation in its procurement process. Other AOC initiatives include: a Small Business Subcontracting Program for construction contracts greater than \$1 million; a Small Business Outreach Program, and a Small Business set-aside for procurements between \$5,000 and \$100,000.

"I want to thank Administrator Mills and the SBA team for their expertise and cooperation in establishing this Memorandum of Understanding," noted Ayers. "We all agree that we have a vested interest in supporting small businesses in order to help facilitate competition and to support local communities."

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