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George Cloutier letter to candidates

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## **Dear Presidential Candidate:**

Look around you, right under your nose there's a hidden majority; to the tune of 23 million voters who can be united over a single issue. This issue crosses party lines, race and gender, this issue represents the building blocks of our great nation and is one of the most enduring symbols of the American Dream –if you haven't figured it out, that's part of the problem.

I'm talking about small business, the driving force behind our economy. Why do we continue to spend far more time, money and attention talking about the 11 million illegal immigrants currently living in the U.S., than small business, when it supplies 99.6% of all employer units and directly effects close to 50 million adults? In this election the candidate who can unite will win and right now no one even come close to capturing this audience.

Some of your colleagues like Sen. Kerry and Sen. Snowe have attempted to bring this issue to the foreground, but frankly a \$60 million increase in the SBA's budget is almost insulting. We're spending \$10 billion a month in Iraq and we have the audacity to throw a token to the very citizens responsible for two-thirds of the job creation and 90% of our exports. Small business owners are the ones keeping us above water, and this how we reward them??

It's a shame that pushing domestic polices has slowly become the radical course of action. I challenge you to put your money where your mouth is, take a real stand and increase the SBA's budget to \$5 billion. If \$60 million is leadership, our expectations are far too low; it's time to draw a line in the sand.

If and when you manage to secure proper funding the next step has to be consolidation. Why hasn't there been any legislation introduced to unite the small business function that exists in over 35 agencies? For example, did you know that the agriculture department has a billion dollar fund that loans to small businesses in communities in with populations fewer than 40,000 (and we're not talking just agriculture products). NASA, Depart of the Army, Department of the Navy, Labor Department and so on all have small business funds too; there needs to be a one-



stop shop, get some economies of scale and deliver the message to small businesses. It should never be this hard for the pillars of our community to get the help they so desperately need.

Finally, in President Bush's final budget request earlier this month, the estimated deficit will total \$410 billion. What does this say to small business owners and to the stability of our economy when we're less than 1% away from our all-time deficit high? It says that I don't envy the 2008 Presidential Nominees; regardless of what side of the isle you come from, tough calls will have to be made and we as small business owners cannot afford to let history repeat itself. A \$600 rebate check isn't going to save anyone's livelihood.