

U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20416

June 12, 2024

The Honorable Roger Williams  
Chairman  
U.S. House Committee on Small Business  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nydia Velazquez  
Ranking Member  
U.S. House Committee on Small Business  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Williams and Ranking Member Velazquez:

The Small Business Administration (SBA) submits this Statement for the Record in connection with the Committee’s hearing on June 4, 2024 titled “Weaponizing Federal Resources: Exposing the SBA’s Voter Registration Efforts.”

President Biden issued Executive Order (EO) 14019 to promote and defend the right to vote for all Americans who are legally entitled to participate in elections. The EO directed agencies to consider ways to expand citizens’ opportunities to register to vote and to obtain information about, and participate in, the electoral process. This nonpartisan effort was designed to encourage voter registration in order to strengthen our democracy and allow every eligible voter to participate in our elections if they so choose. In the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA), Congress found that “the right of citizens of the United States to vote is a fundamental right” and that “it is the duty of the *Federal*, State, and local governments to promote the exercise of that right” (Emphasis added). The NVRA required certain state agencies to provide nonpartisan voter registration opportunities and, importantly, expressly authorizes states to request that federal agencies accept designation to provide similar nonpartisan voter registration assistance.

SBA’s intention to implement the President’s Executive Order and participate in this nonpartisan voter registration initiative has been public and known to the Committee for several years. For example, during a hearing with SBA Administrator Isabella Guzman on April 24, 2022, members of the Committee asked about the EO. In the Questions for the Record for that 2022 hearing, SBA stated:

“SBA is exploring the possibility of designation as a Voter Registration Agency in Michigan. Operational details are being researched by SBA Headquarters staff in consultation with the Michigan Bureau of Elections.”<sup>1</sup>

Once the operational details had been resolved with the State of Michigan, SBA issued a public press release on March 19, 2024, announcing that the agency had finalized its agreement with Michigan.<sup>2</sup> At a hearing with Administrator Guzman on March 20, 2024, several members of the

---

<sup>1</sup> April 24, 2022 Full Committee Hearing: Small Business Administration’s FY 2023 Budget | House Committee on Small Business

<sup>2</sup> March 19, 2024 Press Release: SBA Administrator Guzman Announces Agency’s First-Ever Voter Registration Agreement with Michigan Department of State | U.S. Small Business Administration

Committee asked questions about the Agency’s involvement in voter registration. The Administrator testified:

“I think we can all agree that we want small businesses to vote and be active in this democracy. And, of course, providing information on how they can do that it is a simple process on [SBA’s] website.”<sup>3</sup>

SBA responded in writing to Chairman Williams on May 10, May 17, and May 29, 2024, to questions regarding the Agency’s role related to voter registration. To accommodate the Committee’s stated informational need about the development of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Michigan, SBA also briefed Committee staff on May 3, 2024.

During the June 4, 2024 Small Business Committee hearing, some members of the Committee appeared to overstate SBA’s role in voter registration efforts, despite SBA providing the specific MOU to the Committee on May 10, 2024. That MOU, the earlier briefing, and the various written responses to the Committee all describe the very limited, nonpartisan voter registration effort in which SBA intends to participate. As previously communicated to the Committee, SBA’s involvement with Michigan is limited to the following:

- 1) **Website Link** – SBA plans to provide a link to the Michigan Department of State voter registration form on SBA’s Michigan District Office website. That link is not currently available on the District Office website.
- 2) **Small Business Events** –SBA may invite the Michigan Department of State personnel to register voters at Small Business Resource Fairs or similar events. SBA employees will not be registering voters.

Despite Committee Members being in possession of the now public MOU, several Members in the June 4, 2024 Small Business Committee hearing continued to allege that SBA’s activities are partisan in nature. Section X of the MOU signed with the State of Michigan specifically prohibits SBA staff from:

- a. Seeking to influence an applicant’s political preference;
- b. Displaying any political preference or party allegiance;
- c. Taking any action or making any statement to an applicant to discourage the applicant from registering to vote; or
- d. Taking any action or making any statement the purpose or effect of which is to lead the applicant to believe that a decision to register or not to register has any bearing on the availability of services or benefits offered by the Agency.

The Committee’s claim of partisanship or electioneering is baseless and inconsistent with the MOU and what SBA has described to the Committee on multiple occasions. SBA will continue to cooperate with the Committee on this inquiry, but hopes that the Committee will recognize this effort for what it is: an effort to encourage more people to register to vote and be active participants

---

<sup>3</sup> March 20, 2024 Full Committee Hearing: “Conducting Oversight: Testimony from the Small Business Administrator” | House Committee on Small Business

in our vibrant democracy. Congress authorized and encouraged this important work more than 30 years ago through the NVRA, and SBA is proud to do its part in connection with the President's recent Executive Order.

SBA looks forward to working with Michigan and any other interested state to ensure that small business owners have the resources they need to participate in our democracy.

Sincerely,

*George Holman*

George Holman  
Associate Administrator  
Congressional and Legislative Affairs