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Acting Chief Counsel for Advocacy Testifies on Federal Efforts to Expand Small Business Internet Access

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today Susan Walthall, Acting Chief Counsel for the Office of Advocacy at the Small Business Administration, testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship about the importance and challenges of expanding internet access for small business. Walthall also testified about the Office of Advocacy's upcoming study, due in the fall, evaluating broadband availability for small business.

“Broadband is a transformative technology that allows small business throughout the U.S. to access customers throughout the world,” said Walthall. “We need to ensure that they have affordable access to adequate speeds of broadband so they can take advantage of the expanded markets and the opportunities to innovate. The best way to achieve this goal is by fostering a competitive regulatory environment that reduces prices and expands services.”

The Office of Advocacy has been active on a number of small business broadband issues. These efforts include the filing of comment letters on the guidelines for the Broadband Technologies Opportunities Program (BTOP) and the Broadband Initiative Program (BIP) as well as the FCC's consultative role and the national rural broadband strategy. The Office of Advocacy has been a proponent of increased access to spectrum for small businesses through the FCC's designated entity program, special access reform and a competitive regulatory approach to the U.S. telecommunications industry.

The Office of Advocacy, as part of the Broadband Data Improvement Act of 2008, currently is conducting a study to evaluate broadband availability for small businesses. The study, due in the fall, will provide Congress with a snapshot of the status quo, before BTOP and BIP. Advocacy intends the study to provide a baseline against which the success of the broadband grant and loan programs can be evaluated.

The Office of Advocacy, the “small business watchdog” of the federal government, examines the role and status of small business in the economy and independently represents the views of small business to federal agencies, Congress, and the President. It is the source for small business statistics presented in user-friendly formats, and it funds research into small business issues.

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The Office of Advocacy of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is an independent voice for small business within the federal government. The presidentially appointed Chief Counsel for Advocacy advances the views, concerns, and interests of small business before Congress, the White House, federal agencies, federal courts, and state policymakers. For more information, visit www.sba.gov/advo, or call (202) 205-6533.