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Hyde, chairman, House Committee on International Relations; Bob Stump, chairman, House Committee on Armed Services; and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, House Committee on Appropriations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 8.

Remarks Honoring the Small Business Person of the Year

May 8, 2001

Thank you very much. Be seated, please. Welcome to the people's house for the Small Business Person of the Year Award ceremony. It's an honor for me to be here. Can't wait to find out who won. [*Laughter*]

John, thank you very much for hosting this event. It's good to see Members of the United States Senate here—Senator Bond and Senator Shelby, strong advocates of small-business growth in America. Welcome, Senators.

It's good to have Don Manzullo here, as well as Frank Mascara. Thank you all for coming. Congressman, thank you for being here, as well. It's an honor to have Members of the United States Congress who care deeply about making sure that the environment for small-business growth is strong and positive in America. These Members understand what I know: The role of Government is not to create wealth; the role of Government is to create an environment in which people who have a dream of owning their own business are able to do so if they've got the good idea and are willing to work hard for it.

We've had some pretty negative news recently about employment figures. But one thing Congress must always remember is that to make sure that the employment figures improve, we must remember that small businesses create most of the new jobs in America, and therefore, we've got to put forth good policy that encourages the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish. And I can't think of better policy than to reduce all the marginal rates of income tax.

We're getting a budget about done. And then we're going to have to figure out the details of the tax policy, and you can help. You can help by reminding Members of the United States Congress, both in the Senate and the House—you don't have to remind these, because they already know what I'm about to say—but that all rates need to be cut.

We don't need any targeted tax cuts. That means Congress gets to pick. Some people get tax cuts; some people don't. That's not fair; that's not the American way. If you pay taxes, you ought to get relief. And the Congress needs to hear this, as well, that many small businesses in America are unincorporated. They are sole proprietorships. They pay rates on the personal scale. And by cutting that top rate from 39.6 to 33 percent, we encourage entrepreneurial growth in America; we encourage small-business formation.

We're saying that we understand the power of small business in America, the importance to the future of this country, and by letting small-business owners keep more of their own money, it's good for America. Congress needs to hear that message, that this tax cut is good for small-business growth. And you can help.

I found out voices make a difference up here in Washington, particularly when they're calling on the phone saying, "Let's get something good done on the tax cut. Let's make sure you understand growth—a pro-growth environment."

And there's another place you can help, too. And that's on getting rid of one part of the Tax Code that's incredibly unfair to small-business people, and that's the death tax. The death tax is unfair.

People need to hear from you. They need to hear it's unfair to tax a person's assets twice, once when they're building the asset up and then when you try to pass it on to your heirs. People work in the small-business sector—you know this as well as I do—to build something up to leave it to maybe a son or a daughter. Nothing more prideful for people than to work their life and to be able to say to a son or a daughter, "Here's the business. You go run it now. You take it to new heights."

But that's not the way our—that's not the way this Tax Code works. It says, when you pass on, your heirs are going to have to pay an incredibly high tax. It's especially onerous—this death tax is especially onerous on

small-business entrepreneurs in America, and we need to get rid of it. And we need to get rid of it right now.

One thing I know, and you know, that a small business is built on values. And good, strong values are what distinguish all four of the finalists who are here today. Cindy McEntee * is an active member of her community, a selfless volunteer, a devoted employer. I was struck about the story about one—a longtime employee had to be airlifted for emergency hospital care in the middle of the night, one of her fellow employees. She woke up the next morning to drive 120 miles, from Newport to Portland, Oregon, to make sure that that person was getting the care she needed. That's the sign of a good boss. That's the sign of a good small-business owner. I bet morale is high in her company.

Thornton Stanley is a deacon in his church, a good dad, a loyal alumnus of Alabama A&M, a fine family man. He built his business on quality, on what he calls "playing it straight." It's a pretty good motto.

Frank Sarris shows what drive and determination and frugality can build. He's a dreamer who worked hard to achieve his dream.

Brindley Pieters is a man who took risk, never lost hope.

All four of these fine Americans represent the best of small businesses. I can't wait to find out who won. [*Laughter*] I want to thank you for what you all do for America. I want to thank you for being good employers. I want to thank you for expanding the job base. I also want to thank you for being good stewards in your community. You recognize what I know, that our communities are only as strong as the willingness of people to put time and effort and love into our neighborhoods. Small-business people do that every day.

Thank you all for coming to the White House, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:37 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John D. Whitmore, Jr., Acting Administrator, Small Business Administration; Cindy M. McEntee, owner and president, Mo's Enterprises, Inc., Newport, OR; Brindley B. Pieters, president, Brindley Pieters & Associates, Inc., Altamonte Springs, FL; Frank Sarris, president, Sarris Candies, Inc., Canonsburg, PA; and Thornton Stanley, president, Stanley Construction Co., Inc., Huntsville, AL.

* White House correction.

Statement on Domestic Preparedness Against Weapons of Mass Destruction

May 8, 2001

Protecting America's homeland and citizens from the threat of weapons of mass destruction is one of our Nation's important national security challenges. Today, more nations possess chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons than ever before. Still others seek to join them. Most troubling of all, the list of these countries includes some of the world's least responsible states—states for whom terror and blackmail are a way of life. Some non-state terrorist groups have also demonstrated an interest in acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

Against this backdrop, it is clear that the threat of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons being used against the United States—while not immediate—is very real. That is why our Nation actively seeks to deny chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons to those seeking to acquire them. That is why, together with our allies, we seek to deter anyone who would contemplate their use. And that is also why we must ensure that our Nation is prepared to defend against the harm they can inflict.

Should our efforts to reduce the threat to our country from weapons of mass destruction be less than fully successful, prudence dictates that the United States be fully prepared to deal effectively with the consequences of such a weapon being used here on our soil.

Today, numerous Federal departments and agencies have programs to deal with the consequences of a potential use of a chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear weapon in the United States. Many of these Federal programs offer training, planning, and assistance to State and local governments. But to maximize their effectiveness, these efforts need to be seamlessly integrated, harmonious, and comprehensive.