# SBA to boost lending to African-American entrepreneurs

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

WASHINGTON — Vice President Al Gore and U.S. Small Business Administration administrator Aida Alvarez announced earlier this week a major lending assistance and marketing campaign directed toward African-Americans interested in starting or expanding their own small businesses.

The initiative is part of a SBA-coordinated campaign to increase loan assistance to minority entrepreneurs in underserved communities. The SBA expects to more than double the annual level of loan guarantees now provided to African-Americans in the next three years.

In fiscal year 1997 — the 12 months ending Sept. 30, 1997 — the SBA provided 1,903 guarantees valued at $286 million to African-American entrepreneurs from its 7(a) and 504 lending programs. The agency expects annual loan guarantees to African-Americans from these two programs to reach 3,900 in fiscal year 2000 with an estimated value of $588 million. For the three years combined (FY1998-FY2000), the agency expects to provide roughly 9,300 loan guarantees to African-Americans with an estimated value of $1.4 billion.

"A vibrant small business private sector is a cornerstone to a healthy and strong community," Gore said Tuesday. "Small businesses provide employment opportunities, deliver needed goods and services, and give people a stake in their community."

Said Alvarez, the "SBA has made a major commitment to the African-American community. The targets we are announcing will lead to a quadrupling of SBA loan assistance to the African-American community during the eight years of the Clinton-Gore administration."

Added SBA regional administrator Viola I. Canales, "Over the past five years, the SBA has backed 9,371 loans worth $1.24 billion to African-Americans. From fiscal year 1992 to fiscal year 1997, the number of loan guarantees has increased 157 percent and the dollar value has increased 117 percent."

To help link minority entrepreneurs with the SBA, the agency has enlisted a number of prominent African-American groups including the National Urban League; the National Black Chamber of Commerce; the National Council of Negro Women; Minority Business Enterprise Legal Defense & Education Fund; Organization for a New Equality; and the Phelps Stokes Fund.

Alvarez said the SBA would also work closely in the new initiative with the agency's traditional partners, the network of 7,000 banks and other private lenders who offer SBA guaranteed loans.

Gore and Alvarez announced the program at a meeting of Metropolitan Access, a group of young African-Americans from the Washington, D.C. area who are encouraging business success.

Alvarez said African-Americans are expanding their business ranks at nearly twice the rate of the overall business community. From 1987 to 1992, the number of firms owned by African-Americans grew by 46 percent, from 424,000 to nearly 621,000, according to the Census Bureau. The average African-American owned firm generated receipts of just under $52,000 — considerably less than the $193,000 in sales recorded by the average firm in the national economy.

The African-American initiative is the second outreach effort undertaken by SBA since October when Alvarez launched an effort to increase SBA lending and assistance to Hispanic-owned businesses. Similar outreach efforts to other underserved groups are expected later this year.

# *Web 101: demystifying the Internet, world wide web*

*By Lawrence Ross*
*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

Are you nervous about this new Information Superhighway everyone has been talking about?

Do you think that the Internet and the World Wide Web have no meaning in your life? Do computers scare you? Or are you already on the net, and think you're an expert on how to use it?

If you fit into either of these categories, then you are reading the right column. Welcome to "The Black Web," a column which explains, demystifies, and educates you about the new world of the Internet.

Let's start by talking about what the Internet actually is. The Internet is not a mythical place where all of our dreams come true. It is also not a grand conspiracy to subvert African-Americans (honest, I've heard this theory from some people!). No, it is simply a wonderful way for people to communicate.

But, why should you get on the Internet, you ask? For the same reason that you have a telephone in your house, or that you bought this newspaper: to stay in touch and informed.

With the Internet, you have an easily accessible forum that communicates with millions of people worldwide. Information on education, politics, economics, and your daily life is at your fingertips. But you've got to know how to get it, and you can't be afraid to try. No matter your age, education, or your familiarity with computers, every African-American must get on the Internet, or you will forever lag behind.

I guess if you've read this far, you are quite convinced that you should get on the Internet. But you probably still want to know exactly what the Internet and the rest of those mysterious terms refer to. Even if you're a reader who is already on the Internet, this is a good refresher for you. So pay attention, as we explain.

The Internet is merely a bunch of computers (millions) from around the world that are connected via telephone lines. It was designed during the Cold War, when governments feared nuclear war. They figured that if they created a random system of computers which were linked together, some type of communication would remain intact after a nuclear attack.

The Internet was ignored by most people, except for university scientists who liked the convenience of being able to communicate with each other with a few keystrokes. They could exchange lab results via electronic mail (e-mail), chat with each other and keep up with experiments happening at various campuses. Even though the Internet has been around for more than 30 years, the public had no use for it until the advent of the World Wide Web.

While our university scientist friends were sending e-mail messages over the Internet, a few young men had a revolutionary idea: Why not create a way for people to put graphics on the Internet? That way, people using the Internet could see more than just e-mail messages, and folks could put a lot more information out than through individual e-mail.

The World Wide Web consists of websites and individual pages with graphics and information.

The World Wide Web is a window into the world. And the Internet is the reason that it exists.

*Author Lawrence Ross is an authority on the World Wide Web and the Internet. You can E-mail him at alpha1@pa.*

# Career Day scheduled for Feb. 19 at UNLV

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

Nearly 200 employers are scheduled to participated in the 19th annual Career Day at UNLV on Feb. 19.

While Career Day is primarily designed for UNLV students and alumni, members of the public are welcome to participate in the free event, according to Eileen McGarry, UNLV's director of career services.

McGarry said she expects this career day to be a fruitful one. "We are in a strong economy right now, so most of the companies that will have booths at Career Day have positions for which they are recruiting."

Career Day will take place from 9 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. on the concourse level of the Thomas & Mack Center.

Among the employers scheduled to have booths at the event are Disney World, 360 Communications, Bank of America, Andahl Engineering, Bechtel Nevada, Caesars, E G & G, Harrahs Hotels, Hyatt Hotels, and the State of Nevada.

McGarry said company representatives staffing the booths will be prepared not only to talk about current employment opportunities, but also about what kind of career preparation would be valuable for a future employee. The latter will be particularly valuable for students who still are in their first years at UNLV, she said, because they can use such advice in determining what courses to take and whether to pursue such options as internships during their university careers.

Many of the companies present will have give-away items to offer people who stop by their booths, McGarry said.

Additionally, some companies have donated items for a door-prize drawing. Thomas & Mack Center concession stands will be open throughout the event.

For additional information, call the career services at 895-3495.


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