



Comprehensive Government Relations

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SMI HOSTS POLICY ROUNDTABLE ON SBIR REAUTHORIZATION

WASHINGTON, DC - Small businesses from around the country convened on Capitol Hill today to advocate for the reauthorization of the SBIR and STRR programs. The SMI- sponsored policy roundtable discussion began with talks from Vinny Schaper, Director of SBIR at the Department of Homeland Security, and Kevin Wheeler, the Deputy Staff Director of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship. The discussion provided a forum for SBIR-affected companies to explain their position on why the definition of a small business should not be changed to allow small firms majority owned by venture capital (VC) firms to participate in the SBIR program and meet with their Members of Congress and staffs to push for the timely and effective reauthorization of these important programs.

Participating companies noted that the House bill, while favorable to the biotechnology and VC communities, is in conflict with the interests of small business, particularly the provision which would relax eligibility standards for VCs. They voiced concerns that allowing VCs take part in SBIR would be the death knell for small business innovation.

The Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee has not scheduled a mark up for SBIR Reauthorization nor has Chairman Kerry introduced any legislation. Chairman Kerry supports reauthorizing the program and maintaining the historical focus on the pillars of the SBIR program. The program was designed to provide the government with cost-effective, small business technology-based solutions for our nation's most challenging problems and to encourage small businesses to market SBIR technology commercially. Director Schaper described SBIR's four key pillars as stimulating technological innovation by small business, increasing small business participation in meeting federal R&D needs; strengthening the commercialization of technology developed through federal R&D; and stimulating outreach efforts to ensure that all potential qualified SBIR participants are aware of the program and its benefits.

The SBIR program was established in 1982 to strengthen the role of innovative small businesses in federally-funded research and development. It requires that the 11 agencies with the largest R&D budgets reserve 2.5% of their R&D budgets for the three-phase program. These agencies include the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, Education, Health and Human Services, Transportation and Homeland Security, as well as the Environmental Protection Agency, NASA and the National Science Foundation. The program, which is scheduled to sunset on September 30, has a major impact on national security and small business technology.

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