

Congresswoman Barbara Lee
Talking Points & Questions for DIMP Export-Import Bank Hearing
November 10, 2005

Madame Chairwoman, let me first begin by thanking you and the Ranking Member for organizing this timely and important hearing as we begin laying the groundwork to re-authorize the Charter for the Export-Import bank.

I believe that it is critical for Congress and this committee to conduct these oversight hearings on a periodic basis in order to maintain our system of checks and balances with the executive branch. Far too often in the last five years we have shirked our responsibility as a body to conduct proper oversight on a range of issues important to the American public, which is again why I appreciate the bipartisan nature of this hearing.

Four years ago we came together in a bipartisan manner to review and re-authorize the charter of the Export-Import bank, and to assess its performance in accomplishing its mission.

We found that the bank was not focusing enough on reaching out to small businesses, particularly minority and women owned businesses, and that the Ex-Im was not doing enough work in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In re-authorizing Ex-Im's current charter we required that the bank provide 20 percent of its loans (measured in dollar terms) to small businesses. Since 2002, the bank has yet to achieve this requirement.

We also required Ex-Im to expand its outreach to minority and women owned businesses. Although the bank claims that transactions in this area have increased by 36 percent since 2005, these transactions still represent less than 10 percent of Ex-Im's total authorizations.

Meanwhile since 2002 the bank's total number of transactions in Sub-Saharan Africa and the overall dollar value of those transactions have declined.

Clearly there is some sort of disconnect between what Congress would like the Export-Import bank to focus on, and what it is actually doing. I hope that the testimony today may shed some light on these two issues.

Thank you and I yield back.