



NEWS RELEASE

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SBA Honors Top Lenders of 7(a), 504 and Export Loans

WASHINGTON, D.C. – For the second year in a row, Bank of America of Charlotte, N.C., was recognized as the top small business lender in the nation by the U.S. Small Business Administration. The *7(a) Loan Lender of the Year* award was presented today during a luncheon award ceremony at the SBA Expo '05, held at the Hilton Washington Hotel in Washington, D.C. CDC Small Business Finance of San Diego, CA, was honored as the *504 Loan Lender of the Year*. The event was co-sponsored by IBM.

The SBA also recognized Bank of Granite of Granite Falls, N.C., and Wilshire State Bank of Los Angeles, Cal., as the top export lenders. Both lending institutions received the *Small Business Export Lender Award* for their outstanding performance.

“The essential role of financing in starting and developing a business cannot be overstated, and these banks are leaders in assisting small businesses in meeting their financing needs,” said SBA Administrator Hector V. Barreto, who presented the awards. “We are pleased to recognize the work they have done to help the small businesses of America. Small businesses are the engine of the American economy, and we at the SBA are committed to their success. Our partnership with lenders like Bank of America and CDC Small Business Finance is key to providing small businesses the financial resources they need to grow and strengthen our economy.”

The honorees were: William Couper, President of Bank of America of Greater Washington; Kurt Chilcott, President and CEO of CDC Small Business Finance; Charles Snipes and Greg Edwards, President and CEO and Senior Vice President of Bank of Granite’s Wilkesboro, N.C. branch; and Soo Bong Min, President and CEO of Wilshire State Bank.

The criteria for selecting the winners included the volume of SBA-backed loans made, but the SBA’s primary focus was to recognize lenders that have shown steadfast commitment to supporting the growth and expansion of small businesses across the country even beyond the scope of SBA loans.

Bank of America is one of the world’s largest financial institutions, serving clients large and small in 150 countries. In 2004 Bank of America made 12,758 SBA 7(a) loans for \$451,020,900. CDC Small Business Finance serves the capital needs of businesses throughout California and has funded more than \$1 billion in SBA 504 loans over the years.

Bank of Granite and Wilshire State Bank have had a strong economic impact in their respective communities, from supporting export training classes to financing millions of dollars in export sales.

“Expanding its share of the global market is a constant goal and necessity of the American economy and the way to do it is by increasing our exports,” added Administrator Barreto. “Ninety percent of all U.S. exporters are small businesses, and we want to make sure they have what they need to compete. These lenders have done an outstanding job of helping small businesses to have access to capital to finance their exports and compete successfully. I am proud of our partnership and of this well-deserved recognition.”

7(a) Loan Lender of the Year Award Winners

Kurt Chilcott

President and CEO, CDC Small Business Finance

925 Fort Stockton Drive, San Diego, CA 92103

(619) 291-3594

CDC Small Business Finance is committed to serving the capital needs of businesses throughout California. Having funded over \$1 billion in SBA 504 loans for thousands of small businesses and working with nearly 100 private lenders, CDC Small Business Finance is the industry leader, with current volume more than double that of the next CDC. In 2004, CDC Small Business Finance made 586 SBA 504-CDC loans amounting to \$358.7 million.

William Couper

President, Bank of America Greater Washington, Bank of America National Association

100 N. Tryon Street, Charlotte, NC 28225

(202) 624-1066

Bank of America is one of the world's largest financial institutions, serving individual consumers, small businesses and large corporations with a full range of banking, investing, asset management and other financial and risk-management products and services. The bank serves clients in 150 countries. Bank of America made 12,758 SBA 7(a) loans amounting to \$451 million in FY 2004, making it the top volume SBA lender in the United States.

Export Lender of the Year Award Winners

Charles Snipes and Greg Edwards

President and CEO, and Senior VP, Wilkesboro, NC Branch, Bank of Granite

23 North Main Street, Granite Falls, NC 28630

(828) 496-2070

The Bank of Granite has been called nation's "best run bank." SBA's Office of Advocacy ranked the Bank of Granite as the top business-friendly bank in North Carolina. The bank supports eight-week export training classes sponsored and taught by the Carolinas Export Assistance Center. The training and the bank's willingness to consider new markets has brought over \$6 million in export sales to western North Carolina companies, supported by SBA lending.

Mr. Soo Bong Min

President and Chief Executive Officer, Wilshire State Bank (WSB)

3200 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90010

(213) 427-6560

Wilshire State Bank opened in Los Angeles in 1980 and has distinguished itself as a leader in SBA 7(a) and International Trade financing. The bank has 13 branches in southern California, and loan offices in San Jose, Seattle, and Dallas. The bank is a community bank with its primary market encompassing the multi-ethnic populations of the Los Angeles Metropolitan area. It ranks third nationally in Export Working Capital Program loan production.

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