

that cap to \$175 million. The cap has not been raised since 2009. Today, adjusted for inflation, the amount should be nearly \$170 million. Raising this cap ensures the program keeps up with inflation.

This change also builds upon a bill Senators RISCH and SHAHEEN and I passed in 2015 that increased the maximum leverage from \$225 million to \$350 million for SBICs with more than one fund, commonly referred to as a "Family of Funds."

Aligning the maximum leverage cap for a single SBIC fund with that of a Family of Funds expands the capacity of SBA and its private-sector partners to deploy more capital to innovative, fast-growing small businesses. These are firms that boost local hiring, support our communities, drive innovation, and help our country maintain its competitive edge. Last year, SBICs helped more than 1,200 firms, creating or saving nearly 113,000 jobs.

Some of America's most iconic brands have received investment capital from SBICs, including Apple, Tesla, Whole Foods, Staples, Intel, FedEx, and Costco, among others.

Maryland is home to five SBICs, some with multiple funds. I would like to highlight a few successful small firms that got financing through a Baltimore-based SBIC called Patriot Capital.

CSS Antenna is based in Edgewood, MD. This firm designs and manufactures products that support the wireless communications industry. Patriot Capital invested in CSS Antenna to support new product development and provide a stable layer of working capital to nurture company growth. During the life of Patriot's SBIC investment, CSS Antenna quadrupled its revenue and employee count, from 25 to 100.

Patriot also invested in Advantage Engineers, based in Columbia, MD. This firm provides engineering services focused on the telecom, geotechnical, and environmental services markets. Since Patriot's SBIC investment in 2016, Advantage Engineers' has doubled its revenue and tripled its employees from 200 to 600. This firm could benefit from additional SBIC investment once the Small Business Investment Opportunity Act is implemented.

Finally, for those of you who like to check the weather on your smartphone, you might be interested to know that WeatherBug is an SBIC investment. WeatherBug provides desktop and mobile users with real-time, local weather information.

WeatherBug is the product of Earth Networks, based in Germantown, MD. Patriot Capital has provided various levels of SBIC capital to Earth Networks to support a series of initiatives, including expansion into Smart Home technology that allows you to remotely control your home's lights, locks, and heating and cooling systems.

With passage of this legislation, I am hopeful that more investments will

flow to innovative small businesses in Maryland and throughout the country.

I also thank my colleagues for supporting the Small Business 7(a) Lending Oversight Reform Act of 2018. The goal of this legislation is to strengthen SBA's ability to conduct effective oversight of its largest lending program, the 7(a) Loan Guaranty Program, and 7(a) lenders.

The 7(a) program, through government guaranteed loans made by private sector lenders, provide small businesses with the capital they need for a broad range of purposes, from working capital for payroll and inventory to financing for buildings and equipment. The maximum loan size is \$5 million, the maximum term is 25 years, and the program operates at zero subsidy, with costs covered by borrower and lender fees.

Protecting the integrity and stability of the 7(a) program is important because it is one of the largest sources of long-term capital available to small businesses in our country. The program's longer terms reduce the monthly payments for small firms and provide essential working capital to manage startup and growth.

Last year, the SBA 7(a) loan program helped more than 62,000 small businesses. Combined, they were approved for more than \$25 billion in loans, which supported more than 571,000 U.S. jobs.

In Maryland, the 7(a) loan program helped 833 firms, which pumped nearly \$300 million into local communities, supporting more than 6,700 jobs.

The Small Business 71(a) Lending Oversight Reform Act of 2018 strengthens SBA's oversight of 7(a) lenders in the following ways: modernizes the definition of and compliance with the Credit Elsewhere test; creates a streamlined process to prevent a shutdown of the program with a process by which SBA can request an increase of the 7(a) lending cap, up to 15 percent, after an appropriate waiting period; ensures the Director of the Office of Credit Risk Management, OCRM, is qualified and nonpartisan; improves the quality of lender reviews and examinations; and strengthens the rights of lenders to get timely reports of oversight reviews and appeal penalties.

Of the reforms we are enacting, two of the most significant are modernizing the credit elsewhere test and streamlining the process to increase the 7(a) program cap.

The credit elsewhere test is the bedrock of the 7(a) program. It was created to ensure SBA is only backing loans to qualified borrowers who, but for the guaranty, would not get a loan based on conventional market standards. This lender oversight bill updates the credit elsewhere definition to reflect current market gaps, reinforces OCRM's duty to ensure lenders use the credit elsewhere test for the benefit of the borrower and not the lender, and strengthens OCRM's authority to substantiate how lenders determine and document the credit elsewhere test.

Creating a streamlined process to increase the lending capacity of SBA's largest loan program will provide needed stability to this essential source of long-term capital for small businesses. Currently, if the 7(a) program hits its lending cap, Congress must act legislatively to raise the program level. Finding a timely legislative vehicle is difficult and this legislative uncertainty can trigger market uncertainty and shutdown the program.

To address this problem, this bill establishes a notification-and-wait process by which SBA can notify Congress of its intent to increase the 7(a) lending cap, up to 15 percent, after a 30-day waiting period. To prevent abuse of this authority, SBA may only increase the cap once a year.

I support the 7(a) loan program and these lender oversight reforms. I look forward to building on this legislation by identifying ways to increase 7(a) loans to borrowers in unserved markets.

TRIBUTE TO ANNIE CAPUTO

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize my former staffer, Ms. Annie Caputo, as she is finally confirmed by the Senate as a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Annie has over 20 years of experience handling nuclear energy issues, which will serve her well in her new role at the NRC.

Annie worked as senior policy adviser on my EPW committee staff from 2007 through 2012 and again in 2015 through 2016. Her experience and expertise is so well known and well regarded that staff and Senators on both sides of the aisle seek her input when it comes to nuclear issues. During her career, Annie also worked for the House Energy and Commerce Committee and Exelon Corporation, which operates more nuclear plants than any other company.

Her expertise was invaluable to me during the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear accident, in my work to ensure the NRC issued timely decisions on new nuclear plant licenses, and most recently, she has been central in developing the bipartisan Nuclear Energy Innovation Act.

I want to congratulate Annie Caputo on this well-deserved confirmation and wish her well in her new role at the NRC.

TRIBUTE TO FRANK FANNON

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize my good friend and former staffer, Mr. Frank Fannon, who has been confirmed to lead the State Department's Bureau of Energy Resources.

We have seen how expanding U.S. energy exports to Eastern Europe has supported our allies and curbed Russia's influence in the region. As Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources, Frank can use his leadership