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*NEWS RELEASE*

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**SECRETARY FRED AGUIAR ACCEPTS AWARD  
FROM CALIFORNIA BLACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

***Cabinet Official Honored for Support of Diversity in State Contracting***

**SACRAMENTO** - Fred Aguiar, Secretary of the State and Consumer Services Agency, was honored August 19 by the California Black Chamber of Commerce at its annual convention for his support of diversity in State contracting.

Secretary Aguiar is the member of Governor Schwarzenegger's Cabinet who oversees the Department of General Services, the State's centralized business agent. He advises the Governor on purchasing and asset management and exercises broad responsibility over the procurement of goods and services in the State.

The Secretary was honored with the Chamber's Diversity in Procurement Outreach Award (Public Sector) for his support of small businesses, as embodied in DGS' extensive outreach to the small business community and its efforts to streamline the small business certification process. Certified small businesses enjoy bidding preferences and other competitive advantages in competing for State contracts.

"The Administration is committed to expanding opportunities for businesses, large and small, to work with the government," Aguiar said. "I'm honored to accept this recognition on behalf of the Administration and the State of California, and I look forward to working with the California Black Chamber of Commerce and other business organizations to continue to expand opportunities to do business with the State of California."

Aguiar noted that the California Black Chamber of Commerce represents many owners of California small businesses and disabled veteran business enterprises (DVBEs). Small business and DVBE participation in State contracting skyrocketed in 2003-04 to all-time highs.

Contracts and purchases with small businesses represented a record 30.21 percent of eligible contracts reported, exceeding the State's goal of 25 percent. All told, the State spent \$2.3 billion with small businesses in 2003-04, up sharply from the year before, when only \$1 billion in State contracts went to small businesses, about 17.69 percent of the total dollar value. Likewise, the State achieved a 3.47 percent participation rate for DVBEs in 2003-04, exceeding its 3 percent goal and beating the previous year's 2.7 percent participation rate.

"I have long believed that by streamlining the procurement process, emphasizing open competition for State contracts and reaching out to new vendors, we can increase the number of companies that do business with the State and make our supplier relationships more positive and productive," Aguiar said. "Having a broad, diverse supplier pool is good business for the State-and it's also good for California's economy."