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Opinion

Light amid the dark for small business

Thursday's article in the *Sentinel* on the shortcomings of the federal stimulus program for small businesses certainly made several important points, but recent developments suggest that the darkest days might be behind us.

Just last week, one of the largest Small Business Administration lenders in the country reported a 68 percent increase in loan volume in March. Less-dramatic increases were also seen in other areas.

A recent nationwide survey of SBA lenders has even suggested that the bottom has been reached. Though this may be overly optimistic, the survey showed a noticeable increase in lender confidence and willingness to lend.

In addition, many SBA loan offerings have money to lend for small businesses that wish to grow and create jobs. Every year in recent memory, the 504 program in particular has had excess money available for small businesses. This year will be no exception. And the reduced fees for these and other SBA loans under the stimulus plan create ideal opportunities for businesses to access the capital they need at costs they can afford.

Though it is true that small-business-financing relief can't arrive too soon, bright signs exist which shouldn't be ignored.

— JOHN HANRAHAN ORLANDO

