

#6 HECTOR BARRETO
Administrator, SBA

A year ago, Hector Barreto was struggling to process Katrina-related small-business loans. A month after the hurricane hit, his agency had approved just 76 of the 12,000 applications filed. Today, the SBA's future looks bright—largely because Barreto



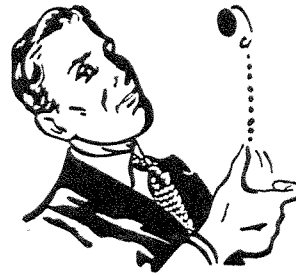
has found employment elsewhere. But he does deserve an A for effort: At the height of the loan backlog, an SBA press release announced that “employees are working 12 to 14 hours seven days a week”—which is, unfortunately, illegal. But even the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory’s labor standards weren’t enough to get the loans off the ground. By March, the agency had approved \$6 billion in loans—but had distributed only \$450 million. Thankfully, this dismal number might not be accurate, since Barreto has a reputation for misrepresenting SBA figures. A 2003 General Accounting Office investigation found that he had inflated small-business statistics by billions of dollars. (Nine additional federal investigations completed a portrait of Barreto’s SBA as an orgy of fraud, waste, and

rampant mismanagement.) It’s no surprise that a 2005 study of morale at 30 federal agencies ranked the SBA dead last. It’s also no surprise that, this April, Barreto resigned in disgrace. He now heads up The Latino Coalition, which has been described as a “small and obscure Hispanic lobbying group.”

#4 JIM NICHOLSON

Secretary for Veterans Affairs

After drastically underestimating the number of



veterans who would need medical care in 2005, former Republican National Committee Chairman Jim Nicholson tackled 2006 with gusto. With the veteran population aging rapidly, Nicholson had the dubious honor of presiding over what he called the big-

gest graveyard expansion “since the Civil War.” Then there were the Wiccans. This May, Nicholson’s agency found itself entangled in controversy over its decision to forbid a Nevada widow from placing a Wiccan pentacle on her slain husband’s memorial plaque. Veterans Affairs (VA), which recognizes 38 other emblems of faith—including the “Humanist Emblem of Spirit”—now faces litigation from numerous Wiccan families. And then, this spring, a VA analyst’s laptop—which

FREE NATHAN HECHT!

WE’VE LONG KNOWN that what’s lawful in Texas is not synonymous with what is right. But, this fall, the Lone Star State outdoes itself: In Fort Worth, Texas Supreme Court Justice Nathan Hecht is being persecuted for answering the call to defend a hack in need. While Harriet Miers stood for the Supreme Court nomination last fall, Hecht—the judge who occasionally dated

Miers and finally called things off at a Denny’s—gave at least 120 interviews on her behalf, including, at the request of



Karl Rove, a call to James Dobson assuring him that she was pro-life based on their experiences together in a born-again church. As thanks for his service, in May, the Texas State Commission on Judicial Conduct slapped Hecht with a reprimand for violating judicial conduct and abusing his position of power. Hecht appealed the punishment in a two-day hearing in August.

Hecht is an award-winning, Yale-educated champion of justice; an amateur philosopher; and an organ player. There is no better demonstration of his awesome prowess in the courtroom than his August appellate hearing: While the Commission made do with a San Antonio lawyer who was paid \$1 for his work, Hecht retained Chip Babcock, a moderately famous First Amendment attorney who himself retained several associates to haul boxes of evidence in and out of the courtroom. Babcock emphasized Hecht’s role as an American free speech hero, arguing about his defense of Miers, “That’s what we do in this country. We have battles over ideas, and we don’t muzzle the most important speakers.” Hecht’s hearing also revealed new evidence that confirms his innocence: Texas Appellate Judge Elizabeth Lang-Miers, Harriet Miers’s sister-in-law, also defended the nominee while she was under scrutiny, affirming character attributes of great importance to the American people, including

that Miers makes a delicious sweet potato pie. Lang-Miers was not punished for her actions. In a moment that proved his fairness and incorruptibility, Hecht averred on the stand that Harriet’s pie is not actually very good.



The verdict in Hecht’s appeal will be released on October 23 in an unprecedented courtroom hearing in Fort Worth. Hecht’s fight for his appeal has won the support of thousands around the country, including the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas, Senator Arlen Specter, and state District Judge James Parsons III of Palestine, Texas. Check www.free-nathanhecht.com to learn what you can do to help!