



NEWS RELEASE

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SBA CALLS FOR MORE BUSINESS-FRIENDLY REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

WASHINGTON - The Office of the National Ombudsman announced that it held its first board member “brainstorming” session under the new Bush Administration this week. Twenty-five board members and 10 SBA managers from across the country attended the meeting. National Ombudsman Board Members are all small business owners selected to serve on regional boards because of their leadership on small business issues.

A webcast of the brainstorming session is available at www.sba.gov/ombudsman.

The National Ombudsman, an office within the U.S. Small Business Administration, was created by the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act, also known as the “Red Tape Reduction Act,” to foster a more business-friendly regulatory environment. As part of its strategic plan, the SBA acts as a voice for small business by working with federal regulatory agencies to break down major barriers to business success. According to conservative estimates, U.S. small businesses pay more than \$247 billion of the estimated total \$395 billion in regulatory costs borne by U.S. businesses.

Acting Ombudsman James Van Wert urged the board to build on past successes and to expand the current network of partners to become a stronger advocate on behalf of small business owners before federal regulatory agencies. The meeting concentrated on formulating this year’s agenda, with a focus on setting priorities, improving operations and defining measures of success. The board discussed ways of improving marketing and outreach, leveraging SBA resources and expanding the use of the Internet.

At the meeting, SBA’s Acting Administrator John Whitmore said that the SBA helps approximately 50,000 small companies each year with access to capital and credit through its financial assistance programs. He added that millions of small businesses stand to benefit from the work of both the board and the SBA to improve the regulatory environment.

The meeting closed with board members announcing an agreement to include a roundtable on regulatory fairness as part of the SBA’s regional meeting in Newport, Rhode Island this fall. Other meetings with the regulatory fairness boards will take place in the upcoming months. These meetings offer small businesses an opportunity to express their comments on regulatory fairness to the National Ombudsman. The law requires the SBA and the board to prepare an annual report to Congress with findings and recommendations on the

regulatory environment and how it affects small business.

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