

# VA expanding business opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses

The Obama administration is renewing efforts to expand opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses, hoping that a little aid to those who own or want to own their own businesses will help fuel a larger boost in the U.S. economy. Two executive orders signed 26 APR by President Obama create task forces that will recommend specific improvements in how small businesses are created, including expanded access to capital, advice on how to cash in on lu-

crative federal contracts and better counseling so that businesses remain on a strong economic footing. One of the two task forces specifically will look at veteran-owned small businesses, including those owned by disabled veterans. Veterans' Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki said veterans, especially those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, have training and experience from the military that make them potentially strong small-businesses owners, includ-

ing the ability to remain calm and innovative in a crisis, knowing how to take risks and knowing how to run a competent organization. There are, he said, "significant opportunities for good outcomes" if the federal government can provide assistance. Helping one veteran become a small-business owner has larger impacts on the economy, he said, because "veterans hire veterans. They know what they are getting."

Shinseki said the Veterans Affairs Department and other federal agencies have been trying to help small businesses through contracting. About 19% of VA contracts last year went to small businesses, 80% of them owned by veterans, he said. Karen Mills, head of the Small Business Administration, said one of the task forces being created by Obama will look at ways to improve outreach to small businesses so they can learn about more opportunities to compete for federal contracts. Mills noted that over the past 15 years, 64% of all new jobs created were created by small businesses. The two task forces are interagency groups that in some cases will be able to make policy changes to help small businesses. But some recommendations could require a change in law or additional funding to take effect.



*The Cinco de Mayo Family Festival was held May 1 at the Mother Lode Fairgrounds John Muir Building. There were over 300 people at the annual event co-sponsored by Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 391 and Realty World Wilson. It was co-chaired by Carol Scamara (above) and Toni Wagner. (Photo by George Eldridge)*

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