



Under the Bus

Since our first issue in October 2009, *VetLikeMe* has featured many interviews with members of Congress, senior government executives and SDVOSB professionals. We've featured conversations with Bill Johnson (R-OH), Senator Max Baucus (D-MT), Tom Leney (VA OSDDBU), Ms. Marie Johns (Deputy Secretary, SBA) and many, many government heavy hitters with a professional interest or responsibility in the SDVOSB and VOSB business community.



We've featured 'unvarnished' news and information regarding the fate of our businesses and the opportunities that our government has mandated for soldiers injured in the line of duty. Our coverage has not always been flattering of the entities that passed laws to give us a 'leg-up' on huge businesses. The set-asides we've earned are not at all what they seem in the colossal chaos of government procurement. Our interviews are done by email so that responses can be hashed out, proofed and vetted before they are sent back to *VLM* for publication.

Rarely have we been denied an interview with someone with a vested interest in the business successes and failures of SDVOSB and VOSB. Mysteriously, advisors to Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME) stepped aside from a planned 'beach-ball' interview with *VLM* about her considerable support of the SDVOSB community throughout her Senatorial career. Maybe we'll get one as she nears retirement.

(Under the Bus, continued page 2)

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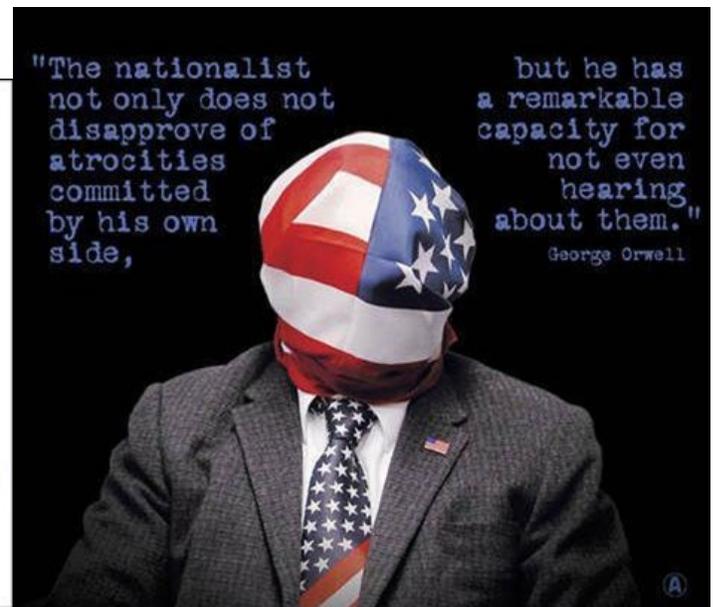
Steven Koprince, page 4

Under the Bus, from page 1

Senator Parry Murray (D-WA) apparently had an overload of competing priorities after our questions were submitted. Though arrangements were made long in advance of our deadline, her press office dropped the ball and did not participate. Perhaps the Senator did not realize that we are another tool to address the dismal unemployment situation of returning troops because – and we all know – vets hire vets. One wonders if a publication with a larger circulation base or advertising budget would have run into similar problems.

On page 15 are the questions we submitted for VA Secretary Shinseki in early July. Though one would think that *VLM* would be inspected, accepted or rejected within a few weeks, VA officials chose to stretch us out until last week before we realized that our interview was not going to happen. It defies imagination that VA officials would turn their collective heads and walk away. Perhaps our questions were a bit controversial? Maybe a little angry? Or maybe they revealed contradictions in the Secretary's public statements about Veterans First. *VLM* regards these questions as fair game for the head of the Department with the responsibility of helping those who served honorably. We gave them very complimentary coverage in advance of the Detroit conference!

As a former federal government public affairs officer of twenty-six years, I have



experienced the crunch of news rooms, sweaty crisis conference calls with upper-level directors and various other deadlines that scream for attention. I am very impressed by the operations of the VA Public Affairs offices and regard them as true professionals who do their best nagging their hapless superiors for information.

Subcommittees Review Certification Process for Veteran-Owned Small Businesses

WASHINGTON, D.C.—On August 2, the Subcommittees on Oversight and Investigations (O&I) and Economic Opportunity (EO) held a joint oversight hearing on the Center for Veterans Enterprise (CVE). The CVE has come under scrutiny from the Committee about the way it conducts its verification and re-verification of veteran-owned small businesses (VOSBs) and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSBs).

Numerous concerns have been raised regarding CVE in the past, including the program's inability to eradicate fraudulent businesses posing as a VOSB or SDVOSB. The problems, however, now extend beyond fraudulent representation and range from efficiency and time needed to approve a VOSB or SDVOSB to the types of documentation required for verification.

O&I Chairman Rep. Bill Johnson condemned the CVE's verification process stating, "As this Committee's own investigations and multiple Government Accountability Office investigations have shown, the ad hoc processes implemented by the CVE to verify and re-verify businesses are not working. The recommendations made by GAO and the VA's Inspector General go unheeded. Regardless of the reasons, the time has come for CVE to take a hard look in the mirror, dig down to the root of the problem, and fix it."

Rep. Marlin Stutzman, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, was equally as critical of current CVE practices. "I want to know how, and equally important, when VA will put in place the systems and policies that will shorten the time to be approved, decrease the level of effort needed to pass muster and finally, create a community of veteran-owned businesses that is reasonably free from unqualified companies," Stutzman said.

"The two Subcommittees have worked throughout this Congress to improve the certification process for VOSBs and SDVOSBs," said Johnson. "We have patiently waited for signs of progress following the installation of a new Executive Director of Small and Veteran Business Programs at VA. While some improvements have been made, unfortunately the goals established nearly a year ago, have yet to be achieved.

Rick Wiedman, representing the Vietnam Veterans of America and VetForce, stated that too often CVE creates an overly challenging process for veterans. "The procedures used by CVE are sometimes questionable. We receive many complaints from veterans who were told that they needed to submit additional documentation without being given a clear explanation of why the information is required or what the statutory or regulatory basis is for these documents," said Weidman.



Members of the Subcommittees reiterated their commitment to helping VA and CVE achieve a successful program that best represents America's VOSBs and SDVOSBs.

Avoiding Common Reasons for CVE Verification Denials



by [Steven Koprince](#)

Service-disabled veteran owned small businesses continue to struggle with CVE verification. The proof is in the numbers: in Congressional testimony earlier this summer, VA OSDBU Executive Director Thomas Leney stated that CVE denies whopping 60% of new CVE applications (Director Leney did not use the word “whopping,” but you get the point). To make matters worse, a number of previously-verified firms are experiencing re-verification problems as the CVE examines their corporate documents and structure more closely.

In my legal practice, I have worked with a number of SDVOSBs to resolve CVE verification issues. Although each verification application is unique, some of the same bases of denial pop up again and again. Below is a non-comprehensive and non-scientific list of four “common” bases of denial, based on my experiences in recent months:

Amendments to Operating Agreement/Bylaws.

Many corporate bylaws and operating agreements, including those drafted by attorneys not completely familiar with the VA’s rules, require unanimous consent of the owners in order for the document to be amended. However, if any of the owners are not service-disabled veterans, the CVE views such provisions as impeding the ability of veterans to unconditionally control the company, and will reject the verification application.

Restrictions on Transfers. Corporate operating agreements and bylaws often place restrictions on the ability of owners to sell or transfer their shares. These restrictions may take many forms, such as a “right of first refusal,” under which the company or other owners have the right to purchase the shares

before they can be sold on the open market, or outright prohibitions on transfers without approval. But in the CVE’s eyes, any restriction on a service-disabled veteran’s ability to transfer his or her shares defeats “unconditional” control, and is improper.

Quorum Provisions. Sometimes, corporate bylaws and operating agreements require all of the owners, or a supermajority of the owners (such as two-thirds) to be present for a shareholders’ meeting. Similar quorum provisions often crop up with respect to meetings of the Board of Directors. In the CVE’s view, these provisions are improper if the presence of one or more non-veterans is required to form a quorum. In order to pass muster, the corporate documents must allow service-disabled veterans to form quorums without the presence of non-veterans.

Highest-Compensated Employee. In order to qualify for verification, a SDVOSB’s veteran manager must be the highest-compensated officer in the company. This requirement can be particularly vexing to new companies, for which service-disabled owner sometimes take lower salaries (or no salary) for a limited time in order to reinvest the money in the company. The good news is that the “highest-compensated employee rule” is not set in stone: the CVE will waive it if the applicant provides a written explanation of how the company will benefit by the service-disabled manager taking a lower salary. However, failing to include the required statement—or not having a good rationale for the lower salary—will lead to a verification denial.

Applying for CVE verification is a tricky process, and requires close attention to corporate documents and practices to ensure that all of the ownership and control requirements under the VA’s regulations are met. Many veteran-owned firms have rightfully complained that the process can be too cumbersome and strict. But for now, the rules are the rules, and must be followed for a SDVOSB to be verified. Avoiding these four common bases of CVE verification denials will be a good start toward a successful verification.

VA Contracting Flowchart

Below is a graphic rendering of how the Veterans Administration has mutated the *Veterans First* program (109-461). SDVOSB and VOSB that do not have a Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) don't pay the Industrial Funding Fee (IFF) that VA charges all contract awardees. Funds from the IFF are then funneled into the "VA Supply Fund."

Resources from the VA Supply Fund finance important VA programs, such as bonuses and "Holiday Pay" for VA's Senior Executive Service employees. It follows, then, that if capable SDVOSB or VOSB are not on the FSS, they don't pay the IFF, and nothing gets funneled into the VA Supply Fund. If you're not on the FSS, you're on your own. As it stands now, few SDVOSB are on the FSS...and very few SDVOSB are awarded VA contracts.

**Veterans First?
No way.
Follow the money!**



Congressional Appropriations to VA for Goods and Services



"VA Supply Fund" pays **executive bonuses, holiday pay, cash allowances**, but few operations vital to the VA mission.



SDVOSB/VOSB

VA buys from businesses with a Federal Supply Schedule (FSS)

IFF "becomes" the VA Supply Fund -



VA Charges FSS Businesses a fee
(77% are non-veteran businesses)

FSS Businesses must pay at least 0.5% of all procurements back to the VA Industrial Funding Fee (IFF)

ON THE HILL - SUMMER RECESS



HR 4048

Sponsor: Bill Johnson (R-OH)
 Introduced: February 16, 2012
 Referred: House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Gov Track prediction--2%; VLM prediction--Dead.

HR 3438: To require the Department of Defense to meet the annual goal for participation in procurement contracts by small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans with service-connected disabilities.

Sponsor: Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA)
 Introduced: November 17, 2011
 Referred: House Armed Services Committee, House Small Business Committee
GovTrack--4%, VLM prediction--Will not pass Committee

H.R. 3850: Government Efficiency through Small Business Contracting Act of 2012

Rep. Samuel "Sam" Graves [R-MO6]
 Introduced: Jan 31, 2012
 House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
 House Committee on Small Business - passed
GovTrack: 29% --VLM: Better than average chance of President signing

2011 Proposed Legislation:

S. 1154: Honoring Promises to Service-Disabled Veterans Act of 2011

Requires transparency for Executive departments in meeting the Government-wide goals for contracting with small business concerns owned and controlled by SDVOSB.
 Introduced: June 7, 2011 by Senator Max Baucus (D-MT); co-sponsors: Harkin, Vitter
 Referred: Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship
GovTrack: 4%--VLM Dead

S. 1184: To amend title 38, United States Code

To revise the enforcement penalties for SDVOSB misrepresentation
 Introduced: June 13, 2011 by [Senator Maria Cantwell \(D-WA\)](#)
 Referred: Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs
 Introduced in House of Representatives: April 15, 2011 by Marlin Stutzman (R-IN)
 Activity: May 23, 2011: passed in the House by roll call vote
GovTrack=2% chance—VLM: Dead

HR 240: To amend title 38, United States Code

Requires (current law authorizes) a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) contracting officer to award contracts to small businesses owned and controlled by veterans using other than competitive procedures for contracts above the simplified acquisition threshold.
 Introduced: Jan 7, 2011 by Rep. Robert Filner (D-CA)
 Referred: House Veterans Affairs Committee, hearings held by Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.
GovTrack: 2%, VLM: Dead

S. 633: Small Business Contracting and Fraud Prevention Act of 2011

Requires that SDVOSB/VOSB are verified by all federal agencies...ends self-certification...
 Introduced: March 17, 2011 by Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME)
 Referred to House Small Business Committee.
GovTrack: 9%--VLM: Roll over, Rosie, this one is stagnating in the House Small Business Committee (Sam Graves R-Missouri, Chairman). Internal feuds in the veteran service organizations and lobby efforts make this improbable, although it was passed unanimously by the Senate.

Editorial



Without question the VA has contracted with SDVOSB as no other government agency has. They typically exceed their contract quotas to SDVOSB by miles. And they should, but there's just one major problem with their procurement policy. PL 109-461 has never—never been recognized by the VA. Not that we're ungrateful for their support or anything, but the fact that they exceed their goals year in and year out makes little difference to the SDVOSB that never gets a whiff of the giant VA procurement budget, the simplified acquisitions that may keep them in business for another month. FedBid can handle all those pesky contracts.

But they continue to hear platitudes from VA's procurement leaders. We're tired of hearing that the VA puts Veterans First when it ain't so.

In Detroit, we heard something new. The VA will begin measures to boost opportunities for SDVOSB! Here's the deal according to Shinseki:

- Any contract not going to a Veteran-owned small business must be reviewed by a senior executive and concurred in by a senior contracting executive.
- When the federal supply schedule is used for contracting, senior leaders must, again, review decisions prior to any award to other than a Veteran-owned small business.
- All senior executive performance evaluations will include a small business performance metric.
- For the first time, VA has established small business procurement goals all the way down to the lowest senior executive level that exercises procurement responsibilities; for instance, at a medical center or a regional office or a cemetery. Within overall departmental goals, senior executives are now accountable for specific goals.

This sounds too good to be true...the question then becomes...will these 'senior executives' exercise due diligence when determining if two or more SDVOSB can perform the contract?

And what about those GAO decisions in favor of SDVOSB. Does the VA intend to ignore ALL future GAO findings? Was there a memo put out to contracting officers stating this? The initial protest sustained by GAO involved Aldevra, and Mr. Jan Frye put out an agency-wide alert that GAO's guidance was not to be followed. Will VA pick and choose the decisions they will act on?

Since that revealing memo from Frye last November, Maggie and Rodney Marshall have kept at it, filing protest after protest based on the Veterans First legislation (109-461). GAO has found in favor of Aldevra 17 (seventeen) times. What's next? Here's the latest: <http://tinyurl.com/8zsvf4h> By law, VA must explain

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Bob Hesser

I've been asked to comment on the veterans Detroit conference held last June. At the July VET-Force meeting, I commented that I thought the actions taken to help homeless veterans and for opportunities made available for veterans to find employment was absolutely optimal. It was impressive. The VA achieved its goals in the area of getting jobs for veterans in the local area as well as some veterans that were outside of Detroit. At the business side of the conference the booths were laid out nicely because there was a lot of room. This could mean that if they use Detroit next year there is plenty of room for growth.

At the August VET-Force meeting Tom Leney, VA OSDDBU, emphasized the importance that those who are applying for verification must read requirements before they put in their application. Tom told us that the instructions for the 877 application are online and available to all of us before we submit the application. I advise each of you to follow that suggestion because the rejection rate of first applications is as high as 65%. According to CVE personnel many of the rejections have been because one document is incorrect or is left out. Enough said!



At the same meeting, I pointed out that ONE of the reasons for CVE being picked to do the verification was because the new public law required the VA to have a higher procurement percentage. Therefore, the VA contracting officers would have a significant amount of increased burden put upon them. In order to decrease the amount of time spent by the VA contracting officers in completing their due diligence requirement, CVE accepted responsibility of verifying veteran owned businesses wanting to do business with the VA. I pointed out that today it appears that some VA contracting officers are accepting CVE verification as gospel and doing nothing else. It is obvious that the companies who become "Rent-A-VETS" do so after they are verified. There are several instances where a CO would recognize a "Rent-A-VET" IF they examine the Davis-Bacon Wage Report. Recently, there have been situations when a VA contracting officer uses the VETBIZ database to establish that a company is verified. However, the company was declared to be other than small by the SBA!

Even after the contracting officer was made aware that the company was found to be "not small" the contracting officer still made the award or took no other action because the company was verified in VETBIZ database. It is the contracting officer's responsibility, prior to award, to ensure the company is qualified for the award. **There is nothing that I am aware of that says the Center For Veteran Enterprise removes that burden for due diligence from the contracting officer who makes the award!**

It was important to me that Master Chief Lilly received his verification as being a service-disabled veteran-owned small business. I believe that the attention given to Master Chief Lilly's case significantly decreased his time in the trough! There are many people from all levels of government and the news media who assisted him. Now, will it take the same effort from all levels of government to help the vet who just got back from Afghanistan wanting to go into business?



The cold passion for truth hunts in no pack.

Robinson Jeffers

Editorial, from page 7

to Congress why the decisions were not followed. Then what? The VA Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations will call the VA's talking heads (Gould, Gingrich, Frye, Foley, Leney) and grill these poor bastards. Then what—Congressman Bill Johnson will introduce a bill calling for VA to follow the law? To follow a mandate? Instead, Shinseki proclaims that all procurements will be reviewed by senior management. Does he think that's a substitute for following a Public Law? —————

Thanks to Doug Fleming for his willingness to provide this communication that reveals the VA's total disregard of PL 109-461:

From: Doug Fleming [mailto:D.Fleming@DPF-LLC.com]

Sent: Friday, August 24, 2012 9:06 AM

To: Fragoso, Jason

Subject: RE: VA241-12-1233 Request for Quote on Boiler removal/replacement

Jason,

I keep bidding work for this VISN but I keep getting told "I am not qualified". I can bid the work if you wish but please take a few minutes and review the attachment. I am wondering **why this is set aside small business and not SDVO or VOSB?**

Let me know if my qual's meet your requirements before I put the time into bidding please. I am sure if you review my web site and contact the CO's from current or past projects you will see my company is more the qualified to handle just about anything your office has for construction.

Jason,

You never answered my question: **Why is this NOT set aside for Veterans SDVOSB or VOSB? Why are you NOT following the law P.L. 109-461?** Is it because no veterans want to bid work for this VISN or **are you just going directly to Small business as directed...?** What exactly is the "leadership" of this VISN tell you? **You sole sourced directly to a non Veteran company** with this same type of work last month and you never gave the Veteran business the chance and I was on site, **WHY?**

Please don't respond with another "I am a Veteran too and 'I care'" because I/we have heard it far to many times here and far to long and no one in the Veteran community throughout New England believes that line.

A National News Publication for
Service-Disabled Business Owners

Simplified Verification Ends

From the vetbiz.gov site:

<http://www.vetbiz.gov/SimpReverFinal.pdf>

The simplified re-verification process will no longer be part of the Center for Veterans Enterprise (CVE) Vendor Information Page (VIP) verification options for Service Disabled Veterans Owned Businesses (SDVOB) or Veterans Owned Businesses (VOSB).

In its place the CVE is pleased to announce an interim rule change that increases certification time for all SDVOB and VOSB businesses to two years. This interim rule will benefit thousands of small businesses by reducing the uncertainty and administrative burden associated with a yearly certification cycle.

By increasing the certification period to two years, SDVOB's and VOSB's will be able to strategically plan and operate their companies more efficiently and effectively versus working within the current, short, twelve month business cycle. Under this new interim rule, businesses at the end of their two-year verification period would be required to be re-verified through the VA Center for Veterans Enterprise (CVE).

Businesses currently in the VIP database with the "in-reverification" logo verified from Jun 2010 to Dec 2010 under the present program will have their individual remaining months added to coincide with their one year extension via the interim change. Prior to your company's expiration date, you will be required to submit an application for re-verification within 30 days.

Companies may apply for re-verification as early as 120 days prior to expiration. All future applications for re-verification will be required to submit a complete set of new documentation with each application.



Another View on Verification

In December of 2010, our company lost my husband, who was a service-disabled veteran and my business partner. Unfortunately, our other veteran owner was not an SDVOB and we had to go through the CVE application process. I included an autopsy report with the application and the other required documents. I learned that this process takes from 7 to 9 months before a determination is made.

In the meantime, we completed the paperwork my husband had started and submitted it along with his death certificate to the CVE to start the new verification process. The immediate result was that our profile was immediately dropped from the Vendor Information pages and we were informed we had been dropped from the program. We appealed to the CVE but they said until the VBA completed their review, they can do nothing.

We sought help from our Congressman and from a Veteran Advocate and friend to my husband who knows this program. He arranged for us to meet with people in Washington DC who are involved in the SDVOB program and who might be able to lend support and with some from the CVE. We met with them all. Most were very helpful and recognized that there is a gap that needs to be filled that will allow a company to continue to operate while the review process at VBA takes place. All were sympathetic and were willing to contact VBA regarding the status of the review of my application.

In the end, and as a result of the inquiries made to the VBA, the review was completed and results posted to BIRLS. Review of our verification documents by CVE confirmed we met the requirements of the program and we were verified in time to respond successfully to a protest filed by a fellow SDVOB when he learned of the loss of our Vet. We have 10 years from the date of my husband's death to continue to operate as an SDVOB company and also redirect our company into other markets for future survivability.

VetLikeMe

-name withheld at writer's request-

Frauds

A popular feature of *VLM*, these fraudulent companies get their just deserts. Everybody likes to catch a thief.



Inside Job...VA employee Snared

<http://tinyurl.com/8rnre9d>

Family Affair

http://www.justice.gov/usao/iln/pr/rockford/2012/pr0821_01.pdf

Project on Government Oversight (POGO) Uncovers Pass-Through

<http://tinyurl.com/98jtx9v>
<http://tinyurl.com/916u7b5>

Worst Kind of Desertion: VSO Leader Guilty

<http://tinyurl.com/8fhfpo>

Unsuspecting Disabled Vet Exploited

<http://tinyurl.com/7auodk8>

Corps of Engineers Levy Fraud

http://www.nola.com/opinions/index.ssf/2012/01/crooked_contractor_aaron_benne.html

Another Pass-through (video)

<http://tinyurl.com/75kdxwf>



Short Takes

Army gives the shaft to small veteran owned business (video)

<http://tinyurl.com/9tyvbrd>

VA to award \$2.5 billion in IT contracts to SDVOSB ... but does the amount include T4?

<http://tinyurl.com/9o8vgej>

Are you just beginning a small business?

<http://tinyurl.com/9p3hsfo>

Private Sector Gets it Done!

With unemployment just above 8 percent, it's clear that finding a job is tough for many Americans. But for war veterans, particularly disabled ones, it's even tougher. Nearly one of every three young male veterans was out of work last year. (New York Times)

<http://tinyurl.com/9kk9gkr>

Boots to Business

The 2.4 million veteran owned businesses employ 5.8 million people. A study by the Small Business Administration found veterans are 45 percent more likely to be self-employed than nonveterans.

<http://tinyurl.com/93fecnd>

Singin' the Certification Blues

<http://tinyurl.com/9y6mbfp>

Yes, Homer, it is time to get Political (Miami Herald)

<http://tinyurl.com/9c6xukc>

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State Activity

Virginia

Senator Webb Calls For Improvements In Verification Program For
Veteran-Owned Businesses

<http://www.alexandrianews.org/2012/07/senator-webb-calls-for-improvements-in-verification-program-for-veteran-owned-businesses/>

New York

New York Senate Passes Legislation to Protect Disabled-Veteran-Owned Businesses from
Criminal Impersonation

<http://www.nysenate.gov/video/2012/may/31/senate-passes-legislation-protect-disabled-veteran-owned-businesses-criminal-imper>

Veteran owned business to benefit from new bill

<http://www.examiner.com/senior-issues-in-long-island/veteran-owned-business-to-benefit-from-new-bill>

Nebraska

Programs Give Veteran Owned Businesses a Boost

http://www.1011now.com/home/headlines/Programs_Give_Veteran_Owned_Businesses_a_Boost_161124415.html

Wisconsin

State program helps veterans start businesses

<http://www.jsonline.com/business/state-program-helps-veterans-start-businesses-6v599rg-150350815.html>

Delaware

5 bills to watch: legislation to benefit veterans, military members

<http://www.doverpost.com/politics/x1704639890/5-bills-to-watch-legislation-to-benefit-veterans-military-members>

Louisiana

Louisiana Highlights Opportunities For Veteran-Owned Businesses

<http://www.louisianaeconomicdevelopment.com/led-news/news-releases/louisiana-highlights-opportunities-for-veteran-owned-businesses.aspx>

Ohio

Veterans get help on city contracts

<http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2011/11/15/vets-get-help-on-city-contracts.html>

Minnesota

County approves veterans business contracting policy

<http://ecmpostreview.com/2012/06/20/county-approves-veterans-business-contracting-policy/>

CVE continues to Deny 100% Owners (from LinkedIn)

Well, I have joined the long list of Service Disabled Veteran who have received the denial letters even though all documents since the start are labeled "Founder" and 100% owner. I have also seen lately that more small business contracts are being awarded to other categories instead of SDVOSB's by the VA.

When calling the CVE office I was told that we had not gone through a reverification since 2008. So, I had to show them the 2010 letter which was sent to me. However, it did not matter.

I have come to a decision to remove my company from the process and pursue small business and HUBZone or 8a business only.

This is the worst process that I have ever gone through.

SDV- Sick and Tired

VetLikeMe

VetLikeMe is published bi-monthly by:

BluePoint Productions

Editor and publisher: Hardy Stone

Contributing Writers: Bob Hesser,

Steve Koprince

bluepoint1@comcast.net

bluepointgov@gmail.com

301-845-1330

We need donations...your \$30 will allow us to continue providing national news regularly. Let's keep the pressure on!

Hardy Stone

241 Diamond Drive

Walkersville, MD 21793



VLM has featured unvarnished national news and editorial opinion concerning the SDVOSB community since Nov. 2009. From the beginning we've operated in the red, but this publication will always be free.

We hope *VLM* keeps the SDVOSB community informed so that decision makers are pressured to provide increased federal contracting opportunities for those of us injured while serving our country.

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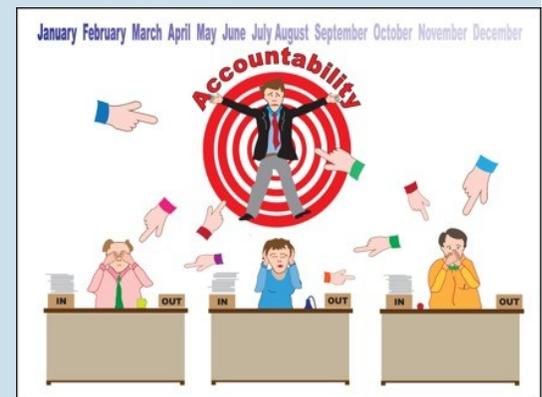
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Other Voices

VLM receives emails and comments from members of the national SDVOSB community that provide perspective and a sense of political urgency for our community. Comments, criticism and suggestions are encouraged.

Identifying information is redacted. Email: bluepoint1@comcast.net

From email:

The CVE process is a cumbersome to say the least. I have read all of the suggestions and in my opinion, few are really helpful suggestions. Everybody wants a better process but it seems that we all have difficulty in suggesting a better way. My issues stem from their position.

During the re-verification process, the CVE sends an email giving the Vet 7 days to comply. Once I was out of the country and if I didn't reply on time I was going to the back of the line.

During this same process, I submitted the requested data and went through each of the CVE steps. I got an email requesting more documentation or clarification. Again, we have 7 days to comply or we are going to the back of the line.

The data that is being requested is a little stupid and frankly unverifiable: the back side of a stock certificate (I could have printed anything), my duties as the owner (I can write any explanation), the number of hours I work during the week (again, whatever I want to say), our recent meeting minutes (which I could make up on the spot), and even though I mentioned that I am the 100% sole owner (in multiple documents already in CVE) I also had to explain that I was the only owner.

During this same process, a young man called me and asked if I received the email. I talked with him about the meeting minutes and he clearly did not understand what they were for. In general, the folks at CVE are not qualified to conduct these reviews and the timeframe for responding is 7 days."

"I think the CVE is short on experience and has unreasonable expectation on response time. They need business experienced people who understand the demands on small business in order to provide reasonable responses that are in line with the mission of the CVE in a reasonable amount of time without the threat of being sent to the back of the line. The SBA should be in charge of the CVE and conduct this as they would 8a's and HUBZone's.

I am in favor of unannounced visits so that the unscrupulous "owners" don't have time to "look" legit. I also understand how this impacts business because the 7 day response notice gets in my way and that's with 7 days' notice. "

I was verified Jan 26 2012, attended the SDVOSB in Detroit and heard that the recertification was changed to every two years. When do I need to reapply? 90 days from Jan 2013 or 90 days from Jan 2014?? I looked at the VIP links for my company, don't see the recertify due date?

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.

VetLikeMe

Written Interview Questions for General Eric Shinseki, Secretary U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VLM: Congratulations Mr. Secretary on hosting another successful veteran owned small business National conference. What do you think were the most successful elements of this conference?

VLM: The SBA annual Score Card shows fantastic percentages of contracts awarded to SDVOSB/VOSB. In short, how did VA achieve this?

VLM: At the conference, you unveiled new guidelines, one of which is an internal directive that VA Contracting Officers are required to award all contracting opportunities to qualified SDVOSB and VOSB's before all others. As you indicated in your keynote speech in Detroit, this includes priority over vendors on the FSS and vendors contracted under JWOD. All SDVOSB/VOSB are interested on how this will pan out.

In your keynote you said that all procurements will be reviewed by a senior executive to ensure that SDVOSB/VOSB have priority for contracts. This appears to be a major shift in procurement policy that does adhere to PL 109-461.

How and why did this change in policy come about?

VLM: The VA has multiple demands on VA staff. The backlog of benefit applications, mental health issues stemming from PTSD and TBI from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, veteran homelessness and unemployment, the pressure from Congress for VA to demonstrate progress in multiple administrative areas. The list goes on...How do you and your staff prioritize these critical issues? Is the Department to get more staff?

VLM: You have indicated on several occasions that VA is all about SDVOSB/VOSB in contracting. For instance:

"VA will begin putting Veterans first--fully first--in our contracting efforts because we recognize the on-time, on-budget, quality solutions that you offer to meet our contracting needs."
2009 5th Annual Veteran Small Business Conference

In Detroit, your keynote speech was equally inspiring: “Total percentages of procurement dollars for small businesses fell a few percentage points in 2011. But our performance was still nearly *six times* the government-wide goal of 3% for SDVOSB contracts. To ensure we deliver on our 2012 promises, I am holding all senior leaders responsible...”

Several protests to GAO by SDVOSB resulted in recommendations for VA to abide fully by PL 109-61. The VA continues to ignore GAO and instead awards contracts without considering veterans first. Several contract protests (primarily on contract solicitations) have resulted in GAO sustaining protests and affirming that SDVOSBs should be considered before Federal Supply Schedules. VA refuses to comply, as evidenced by a well-publicized memorandum to ignore GAO’s recommendations issued last November by Jan Frye, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Acquisition and Logistics.

This seems contrary to your recent statements at the National Vet Biz Conference. Can you please explain the incongruity and advise whether or not the current practice of not considering SDVOSBs first is acceptable to you?

In another seemingly contradictory administrative move, on January 20, 2012, VA Deputy Secretary Gould submitted an interim final rule to OMB that ‘clarifies’ the contracting priority in VA procurements:

[OMB tracking no. RIN: 2900-AO23]

Received Date: 01/20/2012

Title: Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned and Veteran-Owned Small Business Acquisition Program; Agency/Subagency:

VA Stage: Interim Final Rule

That interim final rule states that vendors on the FSS schedule have priority over SDVOSB/VOSB. In view of the public statements you’ve made, how do you account for this?

VLM: Will you rescind the interim final rule currently under review by OMB?

VLM: Do you plan to advise senior VA officials that this rule will NOT take precedence over the Veterans First program?

VLM: We were all encouraged by your speech at the National Vet Biz Conference regarding SDVOSBs having complete priority at VA. What are your plans to implement this into VA regulation? When can we expect to see results from your remarks?

VLM: Mr. Secretary, are you aware that the VA refuses to buy American-made medical gloves invented by a veteran and sold by disabled veterans but purchases medical gloves made in China?

Thank you, General for spending time with *VetLikeMe*:

Thank you as well, Michele, for your help.