

# OPINIONS

## Small Business Regulatory Fairness Board Annual Meeting Attends in Washington, D.C.

**Kim King**  
King Security Services

WASHINGTON – A meeting with SBA Administrator Hector Barreto, Deputy Administrator Steve Galvan, and Advocacy Chief Counsel Tom Sullivan was held last week to discuss the planning of regulatory fairness hearings with the acting National Ombudsman and Regulatory Fairness Board members. A briefing on SBA's response to Hurricane Katrina was also among the highlights of a two-day annual meeting of SBA's Regulatory Fairness Board.

The mission and goal of the SBA Ombudsman is to foster a more small business friendly federal regulatory enforcement environment through the holding of Regulatory Fairness Board Hearings throughout the country. Through comments filed by small businesses at the hearings, small business owners have been able to considerably impact change in the federal regulatory environment.

Kim King, a San Francisco business owner who attended last week's annual board meeting, is one of 37 regulatory fairness board members representing 10 regions based in key cities nationwide. The board members are major players in supporting the efforts of SBA's Office of the National Ombudsman (ONO), particularly during the planning of local regulatory fairness hearings. During these hearings, comments are

solicited from small business owners on unfair regulatory enforcement activities from Federal Agencies that affect their business. Representatives from the IRS, DOL, OSHA, and the FDA are among the Federal Agencies that consistently attend the small business hearings to assist businesses in resolving their problems. Other agencies will attend the hearings as well, upon notification that a comment will be filed that concerns them. Often, issues can be resolved at the hearings or will be taken back to the agency for further follow up.

The program is growing and helping business owners. In 2001, the ONO held four hearings. In both 2002 and 2003, 22 hearings were held around the country and the number of comments received has increased 19-fold since 1991. ONO's regulatory fairness events create government-wide changes that impact small businesses across the country. For example, a small brewery restaurant comment led the Department of Labor (DOL) to re-classify brewers as salaried employees. This success story created a precedent, saving one restaurant chain \$340,000 in fines, attorney fees, time and back wages and a positive impact to the entire industry. There are many other similar success stories. Data from various Federal Agencies outlines the value of ONO's help with a reduction in fines for small businesses in 2003 of at least \$19.7 million.

As a bonus, Herb Mitchell,

who heads SBA's Office of Disaster Assistance, provided a snapshot of the unprecedented task at hand as the agency heads into the initial recovery phase for Hurricane Katrina survivors.

The annual meeting, said King, was a great opportunity to get a glimpse of how the process works on the Washington side, while solidifying her understanding of her role as a regional board member. "I was reminded that I can be a resource to the small business owners in California, Nevada, Arizona and Hawaii, and that the SBA's National Ombudsman is really there to take a stand for small business owners," King said.

Business owners facing unfair regulatory enforcement should go to the SBA web site at [www.sba.gov/ombudsman](http://www.sba.gov/ombudsman) or contact Kim King at [kking@kingsecurity.net](mailto:kking@kingsecurity.net). A hearing will be held in San Francisco in January 2006 to solicit comments from the regions small businesses.

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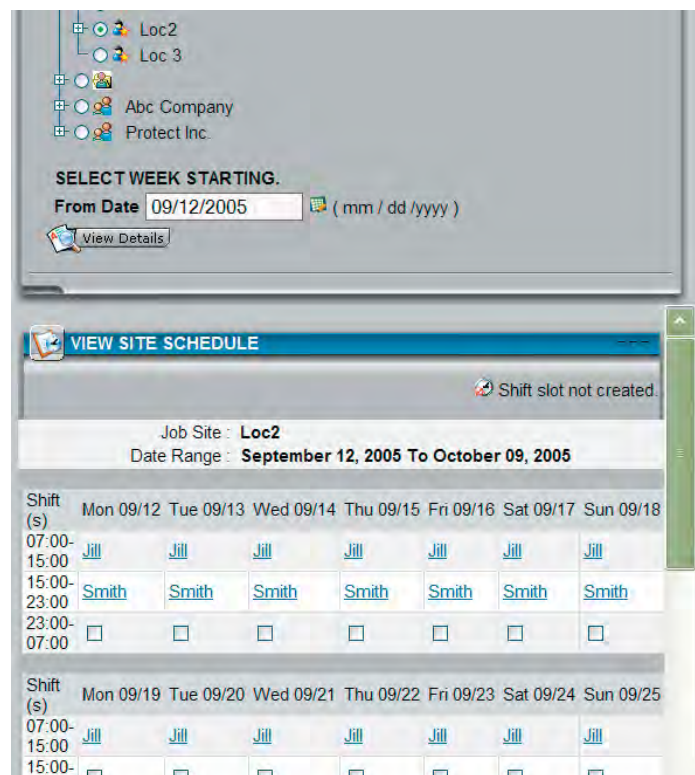
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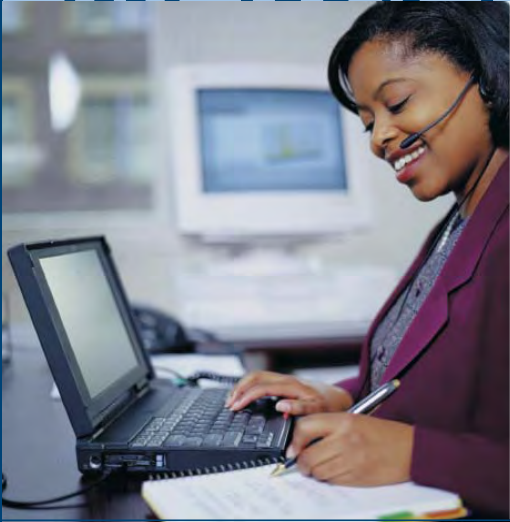
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