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Federal Official Tackles Local Business Concerns

A top federal government official came to Perris this week to take part in a free-flowing discussion with 30 veteran-owned small businessmen and women seeking information about ways to grow their companies.

The visit to Perris by Rhett Jeppson, Associate Administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Veterans Small Business Development, was arranged through the Perris-based Southwest Veterans Business Resource Center.

During a question-and-answer session, Jeppson addressed several issues confronting small business owners, former members of the military and civilians: how to obtain government loans to start and grow their companies, how to develop a business plan, marketing strategies and making payrolls, the best way to obtain government contracts.

Jeppson said he came to Perris to dispel the sentiments express by many business owners—Washington is out of touch with them.

“You’ve got to meet people face-to-face to hear first-hand about their concerns and frustrations,” he said. “You can’t do that in an ivory tower. We won’t know how to help them unless we get out and talk to them—individual to individual.”

Jeppson said that many veterans possess entrepreneurial skills. Veterans own 10 percent of all small businesses and are 45 percent more likely to be self-employed than non-veterans. Veteran-owned small businesses pump \$1 trillion annually into the economy.



Rhett Jeppson, Associate Administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Veterans Small Business Development, speaks to a group of business owners in Perris Feb. 26.

“It makes a lot of sense to support veteran-owned small businesses not only from a moral and social perspective but from an economic one as well,” he said.

Attendees at this week’s meeting on the City Hall Campus include business owners operating construction, agricultural and retail companies. Renteria said the Southwest Veterans Business Resource Center receives about 100 requests per month from prospective employees seeking jobs. He estimates that 250 to 300 jobs are filled through the center every year.

He thanked Jeppson for coming to Perris from Washington D.C. for the informal discussions right before the federal administrator was off for more meetings in Sacramento.

“He is the conduit to the highest levels of the federal government,” Renteria said.

Jeppson came away impressed with Perris, noting that the City’s military banner program featuring residents serving in the armed services will resound throughout the community.

“It’s a great way to honor your veterans,” he said.

Jeppson served with the Marines during Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and, following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, served in Afghanistan and Europe.

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