

## Special Regional Advocate Edition

### Regional Advocates Broke Ground on Representing Entrepreneurs

By Michael Landweber, Senior Advisor and Director of Regional Affairs

When I first started work at the Office of Advocacy six years ago, Chief Counsel Winslow Sargeant told me that, as Director of Regional Affairs, one of my first tasks was to help hire the regional advocates. These would be the 10 Advocacy staff stationed around the country who act as the eyes and ears of the Chief Counsel, hearing firsthand in the field about the concerns of our small business constituents.

Dr. Sargeant had very specific criteria for the type of regional advocates he wanted. They needed to have an extensive network of contacts in their respective regions and strong experience working on small business issues. He wanted savvy communicators who could not only facilitate discussions about small business concerns in the region, but also advocate for those issues in DC. They needed to be passionate, personable and energetic, capable of covering the ground of their regions, all of which included at least four states and territories, with no additional support staff on the ground to help them.

It seemed like a tall order, but in the end we were fortunate enough to find 10 incredibly talented and dedicated regional advocates who not only met all these qualifications, but have exceeded them. Even more remarkable, the entire team that we originally hired has

stayed with Advocacy for the duration of the Administration, first working for Dr. Sargeant and continuing under Chief Counsel Darryl L. DePriest. This longevity and constancy, unprecedented in the history of the regional advocates, has made a contribution to Advocacy's work that cannot be overstated for the office and our stakeholders.

After holding thousands of meetings with small business stakeholders, visiting every state in the union, including taking more than 50 trips with Chief Counsels, and working on countless issues of small business concern with the staff in D.C., there is no doubt that this group of regional advocates has made a real difference in the lives of entrepreneurs nationwide. It has been a real privilege for me to work with such an amazing group of advocates.

As they prepare to move on to new pursuits at the end of the Administration, we asked them each to write a short piece for this newsletter about their time at Advocacy. There is no way they could completely cover even a fraction of their accomplishments, but hopefully it will give readers a taste of the outstanding work they have been doing for the past six years and a better understanding of why they will be so deeply missed by the Office of Advocacy.

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# Regional Advocates Help Amplify Small Business Voices in Washington

By Lynn Bromley, Region 1 Advocate

*Bromley is the Office of Advocacy's regional advocate for Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.*

How does one person—the regional advocate—represent the small business interests of six states, 14 million people, with 1.4 million small businesses? As you read through the descriptions of our various regions it will become obvious that it is both an art and a science, as each region is different, and each advocate has a particular expertise and approach to identifying and amplifying the voice of the small businesses in their region.

What has been most effective in Region 1 is the use of a cluster approach to outreach—leveraging the power of natural networks. We started this approach quite by chance—as the newly-created Consumer Financial Protection Bureau began rolling out its rules early in 2011. In my first round of introductions to the role of our office with the various chambers of commerce, I met the owner of a local mortgage broker business right around the time that we had issued our comment letter on a new disclosure requirement for mortgages. That chance meeting led to the development of a regional coalition of owner/operator mortgage bankers and brokers. They energetically engaged themselves in working with our office to provide input and, ultimately, to serve as small entity representatives in the federal rulemaking process to help regulators better understand the impact of proposed rules on smaller businesses.

In my tenure as New England's regional advocate, of the several thousand rules published in the Federal Register, many had unforeseen consequences for small businesses—rules on catch limits and gear restrictions in the fishery; regulations on crowdfunding,

on medical devices, or emissions from landfills; paid sick leave, endangered species, composites; new rules on research grants and appliance standards. And the one that would've hit New England very hard—proposed regulations that would have prohibited the use of spent grain left over from the brewing process for livestock feed unless it had been processed and dried first.

This free source of feed was good for the farmers, it was good for the livestock as it was a high quality source of hydration and nutrients; it was good for the breweries as they were relieved of the burden of having to dispose of the wet grain, and it was good for the environment as the grain was “naturally recycled” instead of ending up in a landfill. This proposed rule was, in part, targeting large pet food manufacturers where the development of bacteria and mold in wet stored source material was a concern. Regulators knew little about the safe and time-honored collaboration between farmers and brewers until we explained it to them. We reached out to the network—the cluster—of craft brewers and farmers to explain the rule-making process and the impact it would have on their businesses, and the chief counsel for advocacy submitted a comment letter to the Food and Drug Administration in 2014.

As former Chief Counsel Winslow Sargeant once said, “Every comment letter we send represents an opportunity for the federal government to do a better job on behalf of small businesses.” I am pleased to say that they did just that in this case. The final rule was published on Sept. 17, 2015,

with an effective date of Nov. 16, 2015. FDA included three small business flexibilities in the final rule: it increased the small business revenue threshold, which resulted in fewer small businesses having to comply with the regulation; it extended the compliance dates for small businesses; and it exempted small breweries from the rule.

One of the powerful results of this cluster/sector approach to outreach and Advocacy's position in the regulatory process is that the local networks we helped seed and support in their common cause, now in many cases, sustain themselves independently. There are now farmers and growers, cooperative extension offices, congressional staffers, and policy specialists, grain haulers, and craft brewers and others who now know each other and know what the other does. This network has had the real experience of the power of their collaboration getting their voices heard.

Helping to develop natural networks in this way really does magnify the impact and potential of our office. It is my favorite part of this job. Collaborations with myriad small business—mortgage brokers, the fishery, precision manufacturers, SBIR recipients, innovation accelerators, food growers and producers, university tech transfer programs, women owned businesses, medical device manufacturers, and a host of stakeholders—remain in place. And they are easily “lit up” when next an issue or concern arises. What I am most proud of is that once established, these networks will remain long past my tenure.

## Region 2's Entrepreneurs Showed their Flair for New Ventures

By Teresa Coaxum, Region 2 Advocate

*Coaxum is the Office of Advocacy's regional advocate for New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.*

As Region 2 advocate, I cover a region known for its individual flair. Although my two states and two territories may seem geographically unrelated, I have found that while each is unique in its own way, all the parts of my region share a strong belief that small businesses are a critical part of their way of life. Over the past six years, my relationships with small business owners, state and local government agencies, state legislators, trade associations, and small business organizations have certainly taught me that Region 2 is only as strong as its individual entrepreneurs.

New York City is a natural small business incubator—think pizza, green markets, fashion shops, design studios, public relations firms, art galleries, music studios, Silicon Alley start-ups, and more—but I have also seen how cities in upstate New York like Syracuse and Buffalo are actively cultivating innovation. New Jersey has also fostered an impressive climate for small business success, from medical and pharmaceutical research centers and innovation and manufacturing hubs on the one hand, to beaches, casinos, and the best tomatoes in the country on the other. And while the territories are usually known for their stunning natural beauty and reputation as tourist destinations, they fight hard for their wide range of small businesses. Despite fiscal challenges, Puerto Rico continues to provide creative and tenacious business owners with opportunities to start, survive, and grow. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, initiatives such as access to high speed internet and the University of Virgin Islands aquaculture program developing tilapia have also helped local small

businesses thrive and grow.

As the regional advocate, my job has been to listen to stakeholders, encouraging them to share with Advocacy their concerns about barriers to their businesses

Administration and the office of Gov. Andrew Cuomo and former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg to streamline the contracting process. As a result, if you're an 8(a) company, you only

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as well as their best practices and big ideas. I have found that the top challenges for small business owners in Region 2 have been access to capital and lack of lending in the territories, small business education, inequality in Medicaid reimbursements, the need for more contracting opportunities, a new need to comply with the Affordable Care Act, cumbersome regulations, and the need for natural disaster relief. Other barriers include HUB-Zone changes, electric/water utilities, summons/inspections, new business permits, durable medical equipment issues, recruitment/retention, unemployment insurance, labor standards, changes in pharmaceutical regulations, and dwindling manufacturing jobs.

I am most proud that we not only listened to these concerns, but also brought people together to address them, leading to meaningful changes for small business. As the voice of small business, Advocacy has a unique ability to facilitate dialogues about issues that lead to practical solutions. I wanted to share a couple of examples where we did just that in Region 2.

In New York, our staff worked with the Government Services

have to complete two pages of forms to be 8(a) certified in New York State and one additional page to be certified in New York City.

In Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, close cooperation between federal government agencies and small business stakeholders resulted in increased government contracting opportunities. These efforts consisted of organizing and participating in events that focused on teaming and subcontracting opportunities. We also worked with local government, business stakeholders, and banks to encourage mainland banks to lend in the territories.

As an advocate, I've had the honor and pleasure of participating in legislative hearings, small business walking tours, conferences, town halls, roundtables, think tanks and numerous speaking engagements and meetings with small business stakeholders. I've shared Advocacy's invaluable reports on STEM, peer-to-peer lending, immigration, and veteran- and women-owned business. All of this has led to tangible improvements for Region 2, a record of success that I know will continue as the Office of Advocacy works diligently for small businesses in the future.

## The Rally in Region 3

By Ngozi Bell, Region 3 Advocate

*Bell is the Office of Advocacy's regional advocate for Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C.*

Region 3 is a versatile and fertile small business landscape. As the Office of Advocacy's "eyes and ears" in the field, following my October 2010 swearing in, I set out to visit each state determined to engage as many small businesses, entrepreneurship forums, and support ecosystems as possible. I wanted to hear, first-hand, what the regulatory issues, key ideas and best practices in each state were. Advocacy's regional team calls this process "The Three Bs: Barriers, Big Ideas, and Best Practices."

I accessed Region 3's small businesses through five main platforms: roundtables, small and large town-hall style groups, large-and medium-sized conferences, institutions and individual business tours. In addition, we also made a point of engaging the federal and state legislators with and on their local small businesses. My goal was always the same: find the hot button issues and bring them back to Washington, D.C., so the staff could take appropriate action.

In the six years of my outreach, I have hosted and participated in more than 1500 meetings, made over 300 referrals of small businesses to the SBA's Office of National Ombudsman and other federal agencies, received more than 150 media mentions for Advocacy and distributed thousands of Advocacy research publications domestically and even internationally.

Issues were tackled like concerns over ground and surface water pollution juxtaposed to the desire for small business growth in the Marcellus Shale fields in West Virginia and Pennsylvania;

the effect of the Food and Drug Administration's approval process for orthodontic, prosthetic and other medical devices; the maritime port industry's perceived tendency to cater to large, non-U.S. vessels on import/export activities; Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules on upgrading burn off ovens; the Department of Labor's minimum wage rule; the Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulation on workplace injuries; the Department of Energy's rule on test procedures for portable air-conditioners; EPA's Waters of the United States rule; contract bundling rules; lending issues; Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services audits and recovery audit contractor reviews; HUB-Zone program regulations; and state-level regulatory flexibility legislation or executive orders.

The conversations took me around the region. We held several small business forums from healthcare to agriculture, including forums with women-owned businesses; women, minorities, and immigrants in STEM entrepreneurship; service-disabled veterans; economically disadvantaged small businesses; diaspora small and medium enterprises; young entrepreneurs and others. Our events included university venues, business, and entrepreneurship accelerators and incubator sites.

One memorable event was the multi-sector 2013 Regional Entrepreneurship and Innovation conference where more than 600 participants came from the tri-state region of Pittsburgh, Pa.; Morgantown, W.V.; Cleveland and Youngstown, Ohio. The event brought together government, the

private sector, and the innovation community to identify key barriers, best practices and big ideas which support small businesses and their growth.

Another highlight was the 2014 multi-sector conference which took place over three days in Wilmington, Del.; Philadelphia; and Camden, N.J. More than 280 people attended the event. It featured 14 key sectors including green technology/chemistry, cybersecurity, agricultural technology, youth entrepreneurship, energy, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, women and minority entrepreneurship, life sciences, information technology, social entrepreneurship, young and urban entrepreneurship, transportation and logistics, biologics, and technology and communications.

I also had the unique opportunity to represent Advocacy internationally at Demo Africa in Nigeria, West Africa. The event convened Africa-based technology startups, global investors, and local and international government representatives and support organizations. I heard from international small businesses about the regulatory challenges they encounter interfacing with the U.S., as well as to speak about our office's small business support capability.

In summary, bringing people and ideas together strengthened Region 3's small business community here and abroad. Working with and on behalf of this small business community was, at times, simply exhilarating, on many occasions emotional, but never, ever boring!

## Region 4 Offers Hospitable Innovation Climate

By Mark Berson, Region 4 Advocate

*Berson is the Office of Advocacy's regional advocate for Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.*

As regional advocate for Region 4, I've had a lot of ground to cover. Region 4 has the most states of any region in the country with seven. During my nearly six years with the Office of Advocacy, I've been lucky enough to hear from small business stakeholders in all of them, bringing their ideas and concerns to the attention of the folks in Washington, D.C.

Among the highlights of my time in Advocacy were trips that I took with Chief Counsel for Advocacy Winslow Sargeant in my region. Dr. Sargeant has a particular interest in innovation and technology, two things that may not immediately be associated with the South. Of course, there is a great deal of innovation happening in Region 4, and I made sure that Advocacy was aware of it, from the well-known Research Triangle area in North Carolina to technology clusters in cities such as Atlanta, Ga., and Mobile, Ala.

On a trip to Gainesville, Fla., in 2012, we met with a small company that was on the forefront of innovative manufacturing, growing to more than 20 employees in the years following receipt of

a National Science Foundation grant. It was inspiring to hear how employees who had been car mechanics and electricians were getting retrained to take full advantage of the innovation economy. Gainesville has become a strong center of innovation in recent years, with the University of Florida spearheading efforts to support small companies through incubators and other resources.

That same year, Dr. Sargeant and I traveled to Nashville, Tenn., where I introduced him to the growing innovative small business community. Nashville is going through a renaissance as a city and is a hub for small business. Dr. Sargeant gave a keynote address to the Nashville Chamber of Commerce's Business Outlook Summit and met with many local small business owners.

As regional advocate, it was also my job to make sure that staff in D.C. heard about the federal actions that were affecting Region 4 small businesses, particularly when they involved pending regulations. The many issues that came up during my tenure included the Dodd-Frank financial reform rules,

Food and Drug Administration processes on medical devices, visa policies, and government contracting regulations. One issue that resonated throughout the region was the Department of Labor's new overtime rules. I worked closely with D.C. staff to hold a roundtable in Louisville, Ky., where we heard firsthand from more than 50 small business owners about their concerns.

But perhaps the most rewarding part of my time as regional advocate was witnessing the resiliency of small business owners. Nowhere was this more evident than on the Florida and Alabama coasts, where beachfront small businesses were devastated by the Deepwater Horizon disaster. Over the years, I met with many of these business owners, who overcame the challenges to maintain and grow successful businesses. Their dedication and resolve to create something for themselves and the local economy inspired me to work harder for all the small businesses in the region, and their spirit will stay with me in whatever endeavors I undertake in the future.



The 10 regional advocates worked for several years to create a hospitable innovation climate in each of their territories. Pictured here are advocates Rebecca Greenwald, Caitlin Cain, Ngozi Bell, Teresa Coaxum, John Hart, Jennifer Clark, Lynn Bromley, and Yvonne Lee with Michael Landweber and former Chief Counsel Winslow Sargeant. Not pictured are advocates Henry Sanders and Mark Berson, but you can read Berson's first-person story above.

## Region 5 Advocate's Office Helps 'Make Tomorrow Better than Today'

By Henry Sanders, Region 5 Advocate

*Sanders is the Office of Advocacy's regional advocate for Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin.*

As the Region 5 advocate, my geographical areas of responsibility include the six states of the Upper Midwest. While the Midwest is known for its manufacturing and agriculture (and of course, its friendly people); I learned early in my tenure that this region's diversity in both people and small businesses are what drives the Midwest's determination to make tomorrow better than today.

My tour of duty started in my home state of Wisconsin. The chief counsel for advocacy and I held an unprecedented roundtable meeting with all the chambers of commerce representing communities of color in the Milwaukee area. Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett as well as partners from the Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and African American chambers attended the event where such issues as job creation and retaining skilled professionals to grow Wisconsin's economy were discussed.

Understanding the key role diversity plays in small business advocacy, we held meetings with a diverse range of industries. In Madison, we had a great event on innovation with the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, with around 150 people in attendance. In Eau Claire and Milwaukee, I spoke with our more seasoned entrepreneurs at AARP listening sessions.

In numerous visits to the state of Ohio, I met with key leaders at the Columbus Chamber of Commerce as well as the statewide Ohio Chamber of Commerce. We also had a roundtable with the chief counsel hosted by the Council of Smaller

Enterprises in Cleveland. In Youngstown, I had the chance to tour the National Additive Manufacturing Innovation Institute where they focus on 3D printing. On my Innovation Northwest Ohio tour, I visited the Nottingham Spirk incubator in Cleveland. I participated in a roundtable in that city hosted by the well-known organizations Jumpstart, MAGNET, Glide, and Bio Enterprise. I learned in that roundtable that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and MAGNET partner on manufacturing. NASA helps with funding of the PRISM programs. NASA also helps with technology by lending their expert staff to projects. Later, again focusing on diversity, the Urban League of Cleveland hosted a roundtable for us.

Traveling through Michigan, I quickly learned the diversity of concerns and industries in that state. In Michigan, I had roundtable discussions in Benton Harbor, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Detroit, Ann Arbor, Troy, and Plymouth. I met with and toured with some of the iconic organizations in Michigan, from Automation Alley to Spark, heeding regulation, funding, immigration, and H1-B visa concerns.

Making my way through the land of Lincoln, I was honored to speak at the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO). I also met with the leadership teams from Chicago Chamber of Commerce and the Chicago Urban League. The chief counsel and I participated in a roundtable hosted by the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and in the White House Business

Conference roundtable. We also met with key leaders from the innovation and venture capital community in Chicago hosted by Illinois Ventures. The Alliance of Business Leaders and Entrepreneurs hosted another roundtable with us.

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**"I remain as optimistic as ever that the small business sector in my region will continue to grow and thrive..."**

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In Minnesota, I participated in numerous roundtables, two of which were hosted by the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and the Minneapolis Urban League. I participated in a panel forum hosted by the Travelers Institute and toured numerous small businesses.

In Indiana, I met with stakeholders and trade organizations within the small business community. Some of the primary concerns I heard in Indiana dealt with the Dodd-Frank Act and the Department of Labor's overtime rule.

During the past five years, I have learned a great deal about the economic and small business climate of the Upper Midwest, and I am thankful I've been able to listen to and address the region's concerns. I remain as optimistic as ever that the small business sector in my region will continue to grow and thrive — powered by the energetic, dedicated, diverse, and friendly entrepreneurs I've had the privilege to meet.

# Working with Water and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

By Caitlin Cain, Region 6 Advocate

*Cain is the Office of Advocacy's regional advocate for Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma.*

As the advocate for Region 6, I have spent considerable time tackling regulatory and policy issues affecting the maritime/coastal and technology sectors. Throughout my time with Advocacy, I have helped forge public-private partnerships, resulting in the development of numerous summits, dialogues, and collaborations at all levels of government.

An example of this collaborative work includes my time working on developing a public-private partnership to help address a 2012 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) proposed regulation, requiring Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) in smaller skimmer trawling vessels. The proposed rule was meant to offset a perceived high level of sea turtle strandings in the northern Gulf of Mexico. Initially, local small businesses expressed concern that regulating agencies ignored the non-functionality of the technology and the economic impact TED regulations have on the shrimping industry.

In response to these concerns, I initiated a joint task force of the fisheries comprised of the Coastal Communities Coalition, the University of New Orleans, and NOAA. This unique public-private partnership secured a \$275,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to voluntarily develop, test, and deploy an improved TED within the Louisiana coastal waterway utilizing direct stakeholder feedback. This collaborative work of forging unique relationships to address complicated regulatory and technological challenges resulted in improved TED technology, reduced regulatory burdens, and

creates stronger ties between the fisheries and traditional regulating agencies. As an advocate, I firmly believe that these types of collaborations demonstrate how the Office of Advocacy can work with other federal agencies and communities to move beyond a regulatory discourse and toward a more collaborative approach that helps solve local problems for the small business community.

Additional coastal and water-related initiatives on which I've collaborated include the annual Working on Water (WOW) Summit hosted by the Meraux Foundation and held annually in St. Bernard Parish, La. The WOW summit brings together fishermen, small businesses, and associated coastal organizations and state agencies to discuss ways in which fishermen can augment their business through eco-tourism and other entrepreneurial opportunities. WOW has since evolved into an annual event that coincides with New Orleans Entrepreneur Week (NOEW).

In addition to my coastal work, I have also spent a great deal of time at Advocacy focusing on creating and fostering an innovation agenda that looked at strengthening the role of government in helping to strengthen locally based entrepreneurial ecosystems, particularly communication between government and local economic sectors.

Much of my work entailed collaborating with key entrepreneurial organizations to help organize, develop and promote opportunities in emerging growth sectors and to forge stronger public-private relationships. I have collaborated closely with incubators and accelerators to promote keystone

events such as NOEW where I worked annually with local organizations to host, develop, structure, moderate and participate in inaugural events, such as: The Supplier Diversity Summit, which discussed ways in which local, larger businesses can contract with local, small minority businesses; an Integrated Water Technology Panel – a dialogue on the emerging growth sector of water management and public-private collaboration; and the first-ever Women's Summit which brought together leaders from the business and community sectors to discuss opportunities and challenges for women-owned businesses (particularly in technology) and women in leadership throughout the region.

Additionally, I have strived to connect regional accelerator events with outside thought leaders and have consistently worked to forge collaborations between incubators and accelerators throughout Region 6. These efforts resulted in bringing together regional thought leaders at annual accelerator/entrepreneurial events throughout the region from New Orleans to New Mexico, including the Region 6 Innovation Summit in New Orleans. A focus on partnership development and cross collaboration has resulted in stronger regional ties between entrepreneurial stakeholders groups, helping small businesses better connect with resources across regions.

I have collaborated, connected, and amplified the voice of the small business community. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with Advocacy and will continue to champion common-sense, streamlined and partner-oriented approaches for small businesses.

# Advocacy in the Crossroads of America

By Rebecca Greenwald, Region 7 Advocate

*Greenwald is the Office of Advocacy's regional advocate for Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and Missouri.*

Looking back on my time as Region 7's small business advocate, my fondest memories are of the determined and dedicated individuals I have met as we all work to increase innovation, entrepreneurship, and small business success. I've enjoyed speaking with thousands of people: Most memorable are business owners determined to grow their business or struggling to stay afloat, dreamers wanting to start a new venture, and innovators seeking to turn the world upside down. Also inspiring are the many individuals in the public and private sectors—academia, small business organizations, associations, foundations, local, state and federal government entities—developing and providing new tools, services, and initiatives helping entrepreneurs and businesses grow and be the very best they can be. This collective group of do-ers energizes and reminds me, each and every day, how fortunate we are to live in the USA. This is the land of innovation and opportunity where, if you have the will, are willing to take a risk, and know how to access resources, you can choose to follow your dreams and make a better world.

Research reports from Advocacy's Office of Economic Research provided me with a great opportunity to convene topical small business discussions. Connecting local business owners, stakeholders, and thought leaders, while sharing key study findings and recommendations, provide an effective forum for generating informed discussions, getting thoughtful input, and stimulating future, results-oriented actions and activities. I convened my first roundtable in early 2011, at

a women-owned winery in Des Moines, Iowa. Nearly 50 female small business owners and thought leaders came together to focus on the state of women-owned businesses. This meeting generated several future discussions and helped spawn new ventures. Additional roundtables have been held throughout the four-state region, discussing issues of importance to businesses owned by women, veterans, service-disabled veterans, and minorities as well as small federal contractors.

Connecting people and good ideas is like being a "best practices pollinator." When I find high-impact initiatives, it's fun sharing their "secret sauce" with leaders in other geographies who can emulate and grow the initiative. Some best practices spreading around and beyond the Midwest include the greater Kansas City's KC SourceLink and the Women's Capital Connection; Blue Valley CAPS (Center for Advanced Professional Studies) in Overland Park, Kan.; Justine Petersen Housing and Redevelopment Corporation, based in St. Louis, Mo., and the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship in Lincoln, Neb.

As part of Advocacy's Innovation Initiative, it was exciting watching a Wichita, Kan., additive manufacturing business make jet replacement parts with their commercial 3D printers. It was particularly impressive to connect with the metallurgist who is driving commercialization of materials developed by the award-winning U.S. Department of Energy's Ames Laboratory.

After working closely with Missouri and Kansas Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) on a thorny small

business regulatory issue, I was honored to address the Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers training conference in fall 2014, discussing how PTACs and Advocacy can work together for the benefit of small business clients.

This year I participated in multi-day meetings at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C. Regulators from multiple U. S. and Canadian agencies invited small business and trade association input as they work to harmonize and streamline regulations affecting trade between the two countries. This is important because Canada is the number one export destination for goods and services from Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska small businesses.

As my Advocacy role winds to a close, I continue bringing key thought leaders together. In late August, a diverse group of greater Kansas City STEM stakeholders came together for a STEM Diversity Gap Dialogue, generating ideas to help reduce documented gender, minority, and foreign-born entrepreneur gaps in STEM fields. And I have traveled to innovation hubs of Boston, Pittsburgh, and Seattle, sharing STEM and innovation insights.

Making a difference wherever I can has been a central theme throughout my life. Being part of the Office of Advocacy team has allowed me to do that, each and every day. Leveling the playing field and helping small businesses start up, grow, and create wealth is one of the best things we can do for our economy. And it puts a smile on my face each and every day.

## Region 8 Advocate Listened and Learned During his Tenure

By John Hart, Region 8 Advocate

*Hart is the Office of Advocacy's regional advocate for Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.*

Almost six years ago I was asked to represent the Washington, D.C.-based Office of Advocacy in Region 8. It was a unique opportunity with a unique agency to help small businesses in this region, I was told. I did not fully understand what they did, where it was going and how I could help, but I would learn all this and plenty more as I would start this journey and connect with the small business constituents in this region.

My background includes growing up around Washington, D.C. politics, working in diverse industries for several large companies, many small businesses and startups and even for myself at times. I have experienced business operations, good and bad, from many different points of view and learned firsthand the joys and heartaches that come with each. This experience has helped me understand our small business constituents' point of view, and my prior exposure to government and politics has helped understand the government function in helping them grow and prosper. These two archetypes do not necessarily make an easy connection.

Our constituent base consists of all small businesses, defined as fewer than 500 employees. I was told to go out in my region and meet with as many as I could and "listen" to their issues, or what keeps them up at night. I was also told to communicate updates and new proposed federal regulations, and to encourage feedback to our attorneys and economists back in Washington.

According to our mission statement: "We represent small businesses in the federal regulatory processes." I have used this phrase

routinely during my tenure. This was the simplest way to counter the assumption that we were "just another federal agency." I used this phrase coupled with the analogy that we represented all of our small business constituents around the country to Washington, D.C. and the federal government, not the other way around. This has been critical in conveying our role in small business development, and communicating our responsibilities to our constituents.

As regional advocates, we did have several other roles in representing Advocacy in the field. We spearheaded an "Innovation Initiative" to focus on the next generation of high technology entrepreneurs and learn how federal policy can work for them, encourage them to grow and expand, hire and thrive. This fit well into our base roles and helped focus on keeping federal policy relevant to the dynamic economy.

Much of the feedback I received over the years was centered on curiosity and surprise. Most people did not know of our office or of our existence, but were generally thrilled at the prospect of having an institution that looks out for the little guy. Once moved on to explain how we work with regulations, I was met with a different response. I have heard shock, anger, frustration and disbelief when describing upcoming labor policies, or changes to banking rules, EPA proposals or the other multitudes of regulatory changes our office has handled over the years.

I also have stated customarily that federal regulation is not, nor should it be considered, an anathema. Federal policy and

the federal actors are not angled against small businesses. Federal regulation is meant to protect small businesses; their assets, people, and presence. It should help foster innovation and growth, allow for small business startup, expansion and continued existence and safety. It is meant to protect private enterprise and the public good as well. I always say we want clean air, clean water and our children's toys to be safe. Our constituents need this balance and support in their day to day existence.

These rules do get out of balance, and policy does lag innovation and economic realities, sometimes by large margins. The scales of balance can tip one way or the other and "free" and "tight" markets can lead to their own problems. Our job has not been to argue one way or another. We want to make sure everyone is afforded the same opportunities and abilities to exist and thrive and that the federal regulatory market is "fair" for all entrants and players.

I have stated that we cannot cure all the ills, correct the imbalances or satisfy all items on the small business wish list of federal action. We have done good work and helped make a connection that the small businesses across this country need and should have with their federal government. I have been offered an opportunity to lead this in my region, and learn this as well. I have hoped that my experience on both sides and my willingness to listen has helped those in these six states continue to explore, grow and survive, and my hope is they continue for years to come.

## Region 9's Small Business Bears Fruits of Labor

By Yvonne Lee, Region 9 Advocate

*Lee is the Office of Advocacy's regional advocate for Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, and the territories of Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Marianas.*

Region 9 is uniquely diverse in its geographic, environmental, cultural and social makeup. More than 75 percent of the area is in close proximity to Asia Pacific and Latin American regions; minorities are the majority in two states; and it is home to most of the United States' Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. The region is home to numerous renowned academic and research institutions that attract some of the brightest minds from all parts of the world. Such cultural and environmental diversity has generated immense opportunities to grow a vibrant, innovative entrepreneurial ecosystem. The region's ability to attract capital investments and human resources to support aspiring entrepreneurship gives this hard-working group of people a sense of pride.

While we have worked with the broader business community on a wide range of regulatory concerns, the following are examples of the critical importance of Advocacy's engagement as connector, facilitator, and advocate between small businesses and the government.

From agricultural to STEM businesses, entrepreneurs tell Advocacy of the need for foreign workers to help their businesses survive and thrive. During the past six years, we have held numerous consultations, roundtables and forums where stakeholders shared ideas for workable business immigrant visa solutions. These are necessary to let farmers and ranchers employ the necessary seasonal workers to support the region's critical agricultural industry and to provide enough high-skilled workers for fast-growing STEM sectors.

Where there's a will, there's a way for entrepreneurs and their

employees to gain technical skills. Academic institutions worked with Advocacy to look for ways to allow international students and researchers to remain in the U.S. to pursue their entrepreneurial ideas and research that would benefit the U.S. economy. Stakeholders are encouraged by a new USCIS proposal to grant parole status to international entrepreneurs whose startups would have significant potential rapid growth and job creation in the United States. Interested groups have begun organizing roundtable discussions for Advocacy to hear stakeholder input to this proposed rule.

Among the region's fastest growing entrepreneurs are Asian American- and Latino-owned businesses. And by 2030, 2 billion new Asian consumers will join

export and import and export security controls. The experience and knowledge of these business stakeholders are valuable in helping to shape future trade agreements that would benefit U.S. small businesses.

While special rules allow small businesses owned by Native Hawaiian entities to participate in the SBA 8(a) program, Native Hawaiian Organizations (NHOs) have reported to Advocacy that the current 8(a) certification process has delayed or discouraged interested Native Hawaiian business from applying.

After ongoing efforts to find a mutually workable solution, the SBA recently announced a new rule to replace the current cumbersome review and recertification process with a one-time certifica-

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**“Where there's a will, there's a way for entrepreneurs and their employees to gain technical skills...”**

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the world's middle class. Many of these entrepreneurs have familial or cultural ties to the Asia Pacific and Americas regions and are strategically positioned to reach these fast growing markets. As regional advocate, I have facilitated informational and regulatory forums between the region's business leaders and responsible federal agencies to share perspectives on a broad range of international business regulatory concerns including the harmonization and protection of patent rights and intellectual property; biotech and medical research and development; food

tion application. Once the rule is finalized more NHOs in Hawaii as well as the continental U.S. are expected to apply for the new streamlined 8(a) certification. And with more successful businesses, increased profits are expected to be generated to support more initiatives and programs to benefit Native Hawaiians.

Every entrepreneur has an inspirational journey. I am confident Region 9's entrepreneurial ecosystem will continue to grow as today's innovators lead the way so future aspiring entrepreneurs can thrive.

# From Timber to Tech, Region 10 Grows Small Business

By Jennifer Clark, Region 10 Advocate

Clark is the Office of Advocacy's regional advocate for Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

The diversity of small businesses in the Pacific Northwest is truly astounding and has made my tenure as regional advocate a varied and exciting experience. I've worked on such natural resource and environmental issues as timber set asides, short-haul lumber trucking hours, spotted owl critical habitat, and fishing tourism. And, at the same time, I've advocated for high-tech concerns like clean tech by-product classification, medical device testing, and aviation innovation. The constant in my interactions across so many business sectors has been witnessing the sheer determination of the small business owner to adapt, survive and thrive. It has been a privilege to serve these dedicated job creators and innovators by helping build awareness of proposed regulations that will shape the business environment in which they operate, and highlighting opportunities to provide input that may reduce unintended burdens.

In addition to connecting regional stakeholders to the regulatory process in Washington, D.C., I have had many interactions in the small business community centered on the Office of Advocacy's research products. Recently, Advocacy's Office of Economic Research produced a series of studies focused on diversity in STEM entrepreneurship. The reaction in Region 10 has gone far beyond a simple, "That's interesting." The findings from Advocacy's report *Understanding the Gender Gap in STEM Fields Entrepreneurship* sparked significant interest in Washington State. This created an opportunity to bring Advocacy's

Director of Economic Research, Christine Kymn and several other staff to Seattle for a two-day series of events through which we were able to share the study insights with hundreds of stakeholders. These participants are committed to implementing changes in their organizations, so the study is influencing real-time decision-making in the region.

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**"It has been a privilege to serve these dedicated job creators and innovators..."**

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Subsequently, Advocacy has released a feasibility study for a similar investigation of minority STEM entrepreneurs as well as an analysis of immigrant STEM entrepreneurship entitled *Imported Entrepreneurs: Foreign-Born Scientists and Engineers in U.S. STEM Fields Entrepreneurship*. In September, I shared findings from this research with the Seattle area STEM entrepreneurship community, to provide additional insights as they continue honing policies and programs to reduce persistent gaps in STEM entrepreneurship participation.

Facilitating these discussions has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my role as regional advocate. Seeing firsthand the power of actionable research and the significant impact it can have when translated into real-time policymaking, program design and, ultimately, improved outcomes for small business, has been inspiring.

I am grateful that the value generated from these research insights will continue to improve access to STEM entrepreneurship in the region well beyond my time in Advocacy, as it has been embedded in the newly implemented practices of our local businesses, educational institutions and state policies.

Finally, I am honored that Region 10 kicked off Advocacy's Innovation Initiative. The initiative allows the office to focus on innovators and entrepreneurs who might not naturally reach out to Advocacy. Seattle was host to the office's first regional innovation symposium in 2012, to coincide with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Seattle World's Fair. Entitled "Small Business and Government: Maximizing Entrepreneurship, Driving Innovation," the event was a daylong, participant-driven conversation about the role of innovation and entrepreneurship in our economy. Panels throughout the day focused on central small business topics such as optimizing the relationship between small business innovators and government, maximizing the impact of entrepreneurial accelerators, and utilizing emerging capital strategies. Each year since then, a different region has convened a similar event highlighting the unique regional environment that shapes the local innovation ecosystem. It is that kind of innovation that has planted the seeds for economic growth in our region and I know this will continue for the next regional advocate.



Sharpening skills in a high-tech era: Region 1 Advocate Lynn Bromley facilitates a STEM workshop for underrepresented professionals in Boston in September.



Supporting business from the ground up: Region 2 Advocate Teresa Coaxum gets a tour of a small business with former Chief Counsel Winslow Sargeant.



Amplifying the voice of the people: Region 3 Advocate Ngozi Bell speaks on behalf of the people in the states she represents and echoes her own prior experience to groups large and small.



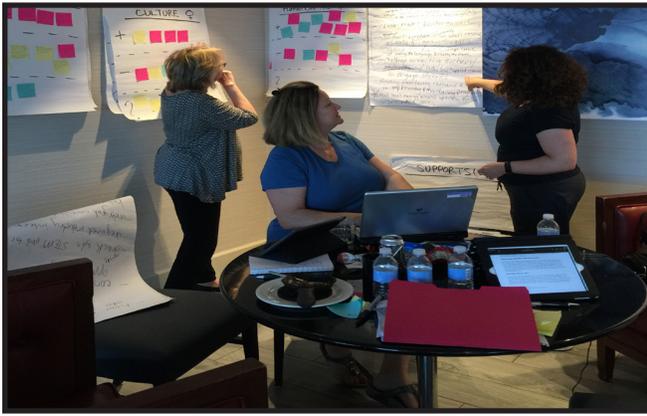
Gaining information and insight: Region 4 Advocate Mark Berson Region 4 has the most states of any region in the country with seven and brings his observations back to Washington, D.C.



Bringing good ideas to the table: Region 5 Advocate Henry Sanders and former Chief Counsel Winslow Sargeant lead a small business roundtable in Wisconsin.



Addressing relevant issues: Region 6 Advocate Caitlin Cain participating in NOEW—New Orleans Entrepreneur Week—a keystone event for incubators and accelerators.



Building relationships in the field: Region 1 Advocate Lynn Bromley, Region 7 Advocate Rebecca Greenwald, and Region 10 Advocate Jennifer Clark.



Having a Hart for small business. Region 8 Advocate John Hart addresses the Missoula (Montana) Chamber of Commerce during the annual State of Missoula Commerce Report.



Social networking: Chief Economist and Director of the Office of Economic Research Dr. Christine Kymn and Region 9 Advocate Yvonne Lee engage with members of the small business community face to face.



Growing future entrepreneurs: Region 10 Advocate Jennifer Clark met with women and girls from different sectors to encourage entrepreneurship in the STEM fields.




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**“Without regional advocates, Advocacy would struggle to fulfill its duty as the small business advocate and continue as the strong voice for America’s small businesses nationwide...”**

**—Chief Counsel  
Darryl L. DePriest**

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Senior Advisor and Director of Regional Affairs Michael Landweber, Region 3 Advocate Ngozi Bell, Region 8 Advocate John Hart, former Chief Counsel Winslow Sargeant, Region 5 Advocate Henry Sanders, Region 7 Advocate Rebecca Greenwald, Region 6 Advocate Caitlin Cain, Region 2 Advocate Teresa Coaxum, Region 4 Advocate Mark Berson, Region 10 Advocate Jennifer Clark, and Region 1 Advocate Lynn Bromley

Region 4 Advocate Mark Berson, Region 5 Advocate Henry Sanders, Region 6 Advocate Caitlin Cain, former Chief Counsel Winslow Sargeant, Region 8 Advocate John Hart, Advocacy's Shelia Myles, Region 3 Advocate Ngozi Bell, Region 7 Advocate Rebecca Greenwald, Region 9 Advocate Yvonne Lee, Region 10 Advocate Jennifer Clark, Region 1 Advocate Lynn Bromley, Region 2 Advocate Teresa Coaxum, and Senior Advisor and Director of Regional Affairs Michael Landweber



Senior Advisor and Director of Regional Affairs Michael Landweber, Region 6 Advocate Caitlin Cain, Region 2 Advocate Teresa Coaxum, Region 7 Advocate Rebecca Greenwald, Region 4 Advocate Mark Berson, Region 8 Advocate John Hart, Region 1 Advocate Lynn Bromley, Chief Counsel Darryl L. DePriest, Region 9 Advocate Yvonne Lee, Region 3 Advocate Ngozi Bell, and Region 10 Advocate Jennifer Clark.

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## Message From the Chief Counsel

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### The Irreplaceable Role of the Regional Advocate

By Darryl L. DePriest, Chief Counsel for Advocacy

For the Office of Advocacy to fulfill its role as the voice for small business in the regulatory process, we have to hear more than just the opinions inside the beltway. For this very reason, since the late 1970s, 10 regional advocates have assisted the Office of Advocacy in its outreach efforts. During this administration, regional advocates have participated in thousands of events; and with their support, the Office of Advocacy's grassroots efforts remain robust.

A regional advocate's top priority is the open line of communication with local and regional small business stakeholders. These individuals provide a critical link from the mom-and-pop shops to the rule writers in Washington, D.C. Most of their time is spent discussing the impact of government regulations and listening to concerns about unnecessary burdens placed on the American small business owner. regional advocates are also an entry point for many small business owners to reach the SBA Office of the Ombudsman. During last year alone, our regional advocates sent 99 referrals to the National

Ombudsman, who assisted these small businesses experiencing unfair federal regulation enforcement actions.

During my time as Chief Counsel, I have found that the regional advocates provide information that the office could not garner within the walls of 409 3rd Street Southwest, SBA's headquarters. Their comments have underscored our message in our comment letters and played a pivotal role in understanding the small business impacts. Regional advocates accomplish their mission by meeting with Main Street small businesses, hosting roundtables on important regulatory and entrepreneurial topics, and traveling to all the different states and territories to hear directly from Advocacy's stakeholders. Advocacy's regional advocates often find the small business owner is the best person to pinpoint regulatory flexibilities that would keep a regulation intact without placing an undue burden on the business owner.

Recently, I had the opportunity to see these practices in action. I traveled to Denver, Colo., to meet with small business owners and



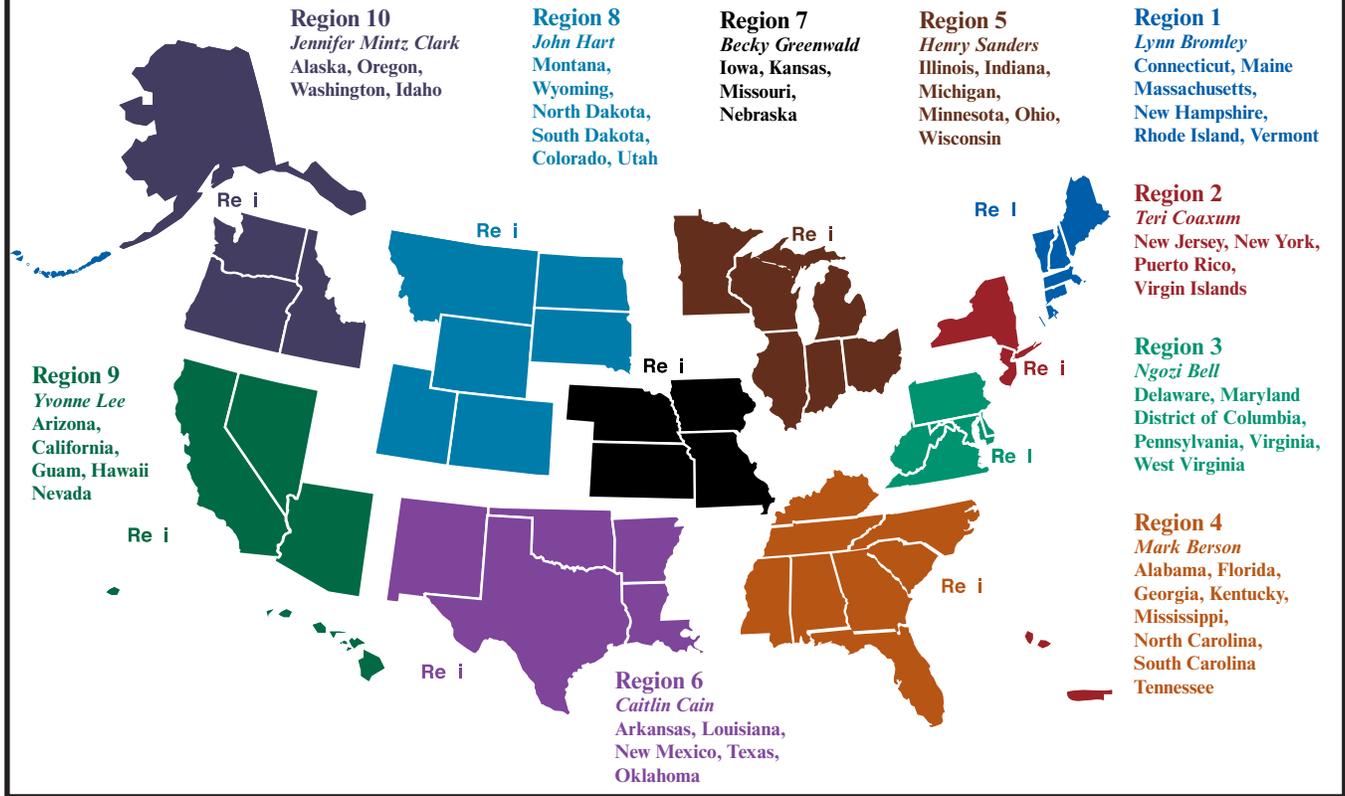
Chief Counsel Darryl L. DePriest

discuss their concerns. With the help of our Region 8 Advocate John Hart, we heard from small businesses about the overtime rule, visa concerns, and discussed the recent crowdfunding regulations. Without regional advocates, Advocacy would struggle to fulfill its duty as the small business advocate and continue as the strong voice for America's small businesses nationwide. This is the irreplaceable role that regional advocates play in the regulatory process.



Senior Advisor and Director of Regional Affairs Michael Landweber takes a moment after an event to pose with some of the accomplished regional advocates: Region 9's Yvonne Lee, Region 7's Rebecca Greenwald, Region 3's Ngozi Bell, Region 2's Teresa Coaxum, and Region 10's Jennifer Clark We know all 10 of the advocates will continue their success in their next chapters.

# The Office of Advocacy's Regional Advocates



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The Office of Advocacy is the independent voice for small business in the federal government. The office is the watchdog of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) and the source of small business statistics. Advocacy advances the views and concerns of small business before Congress, the White House, the federal agencies, the federal courts, and state policymakers.

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**Address** Office of Advocacy, U.S. Small Business Administration, MC 3114, Washington, DC 20416

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