

## “One-Size-Fits-All Doesn’t Fit!” – Small Businesses in Kentucky and Ohio Talk to Advocacy

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Small businesses once again gave Advocacy an earful of federal regulatory concerns at the most recent Regional Regulatory Reform Roundtables held in Lexington, Kentucky on July 31<sup>st</sup>, Cincinnati, Ohio on Aug. 1<sup>st</sup>, Cadiz, Ohio on Aug. 2<sup>nd</sup> and in Cleveland, Ohio on Aug. 3<sup>rd</sup>. Business owners from all over the area spent time away from their offices, plants, stores and warehouses in order to voice their concerns to Advocacy staff in hopes of obtaining some regulatory relief from numerous federal regulations affecting their businesses.

These roundtables were the third set in Advocacy’s important series of meetings across the country with affected small businesses, congressional staff, federal agency staff and small business representatives. Advocacy began this effort in June of this year in response to President Trump’s Executive Orders 13771 and 13777 focused on regulatory reform by federal agencies. The goal is to hear first-hand the specific regulatory burdens small businesses in each area are facing and what specific changes are needed in order to reduce those burdens. Advocacy is compiling this information and working with the agencies on numerous regulations in an effort to reform, revise, replace or eliminate where possible. As the voice of small business, Advocacy is uniquely positioned to assist federal agencies in their reform efforts and ensure that the needs of these vital components of our economy are addressed.

What we heard in this region was a distinct call for reform with an eye towards ending the one size fits all approach to regulating. “There shouldn’t be one set of laws that addresses both the biggest of the big and the smallest of the small. It just doesn’t work,” said one local Kentucky bank owner. Small businesses told Advocacy that they are frustrated and tired of trying to comply with regulations that don’t make sense for the type and size of their operation. “One solution for all businesses doesn’t work for small business,” declared one Ohio owner in the transportation industry. “I feel like the government is trying to put a square peg in a round hole,” stated another.

Another overall theme Advocacy heard in this region was that the large number of regulations facing small businesses has grown in number over the years. With this volume comes an increasing paperwork burden associated with compliance, businesses stated. A small oil and gas company told Advocacy that he has to “hire 2-4 people just to do the documentation of one regulation.” Advocacy also heard that while the number of regulations is a big concern, the lack of plain language and overuse of complicated compliance mandates has many small businesses confused and overwhelmed. “I can’t afford to hire teams of lawyers just to help me figure out and

interpret these complicated regulations,” stated a tobacco store owner. “Trying to keep up with the sheer volume of regulations is daunting. It’s an alphabet soup of federal agencies and regulations that are nearly impossible to navigate,” an Ohio food supplier proclaimed.

Overall, small businesses in attendance at these roundtables had very specific concerns and knew exactly which federal regulations were most troublesome for their business. We heard detailed complaints about the EPA lead paint rule, the FDA Tobacco Deeming rule, the DOL Fiduciary rule, HUD Community Development Block Grant rules, DOL’s H2B visa regulations, DOL’s Overtime rule, EPA’s Clean Air Act rules, FDA’s labeling rules, Fish and Wildlife’s Endangered Species regulations, DOT’s Hours of Service rule, and many, many more. There were even calls for increased periodic review of existing regulations because, as one small automobile dealer said, “Bad rules have a shelf life, but never get taken off the shelf.”

At each one of these regional roundtables the Office of Advocacy learns more about the burdens of local small businesses, and frequently about specific regional concerns that aren’t being considered by the agencies that regulate them. Small businesses in Kentucky and Ohio are overwhelmed and feel that “it is getting harder and harder to survive” and that they are “being set up to fail” by the federal government as a result of the current regulatory environment. The one thing they can all agree on is their appreciation for Advocacy taking the time to travel to their city, state and region to meet them face to face and attempt to understand their unique concerns. As one Cleveland business owner proclaimed, “Thank you so much for coming to our region. What your office does is so important to small businesses. You guys should be renamed the Office of Common Sense!”

Three Members of Congress also joined Advocacy in listening to small business concerns. Congressman Andy Barr (R-Ky.) asked Advocacy to host a roundtable in Lexington, Kentucky and spent the morning with Advocacy and more than 100 small businesses at the roundtable. In Cincinnati, House Small Business Committee Chairman Steve Chabot (R-Ohio) welcomed Advocacy and the large crowd of small businesses who spent their Tuesday morning informing Advocacy of their federal regulatory concerns. Following the Cleveland roundtable, Congressman David Joyce (R-Ohio) joined Advocacy staff at Caruso’s Coffee, a family owned coffee roasting company located in Brecksville, Ohio. Read our site visit blog for more on Caruso’s.

For more information on Advocacy’s Regional Regulatory Reform Roundtables, or to provide information on small business regulatory burdens, please visit our web page.