



# NEWS RELEASE

## PRESS OFFICE

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### **Small Business Owners Given Opportunity to Comment about Excessive Federal Regulatory Enforcement**

**JACKSONVILLE**--Small business owners with concerns about excessive enforcement of federal rules can voice their complaints during a U.S. Small Business Administration Regulatory Fairness Board hearing in Orlando at the Orange County Convention Center on Friday, May 21 from 2 to 5 p.m. The hearing—the first of its kind on a national level—is being held in conjunction with *SBA Expo '04: Celebrating National Small Business Week*, the agency's three-day conference celebrating National Small Business Week.

The convention center is located at 9800 International Drive, in Orlando, and the hearing will be held in Room 315A. *SBA Expo '04* events will also be held at the Orange County Convention Center, May 19-21.

Testimony from local business owners will be heard by SBA National Ombudsman Michael Barrera. In addition, members of the 10 regional SBA regulatory fairness boards will present comments about regulatory compliance issues from small business owners in their respective areas.

SBA National Ombudsman Michael Barrera holds hearings around the country for business owners to discuss openly, without fear of retaliation, their concerns about federal regulatory compliance practices.

"We work with agencies back in Washington, D.C. to encourage a less punitive and more small-business friendly regulatory environment," Barrera said.

"One of the biggest concerns small business owners face is unfair enforcement of federal regulations. They also worry about telling their stories because they fear retaliation by federal agencies," Barrera said. "Small business owners want to play by the rules and comply with federal regulations, and we want to encourage federal regulators to assist business owners with compliance rather than go straight to the penalty stage."

Barrera welcomes the chance for small business owners to speak out. "If anyone has been subjected to unfair or excessive regulatory enforcement by a federal agency, we want to hear your story."

Anyone interested in testifying at this hearing can contact Jose Mendez at 202-205-6178, or by e-mail at [jose.mendez@sba.gov](mailto:jose.mendez@sba.gov). For additional information about the National Ombudsman and this hearing, visit the National Ombudsman's Web site at [www.sba.gov/ombudsman](http://www.sba.gov/ombudsman).

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The Ombudsman's office works closely with more than 35 federal regulatory agencies to resolve complaints about excessive enforcement of federal regulations. Congress established the Office of the National Ombudsman in 1996 with the passage of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act. The act established 10 regional fairness boards, served by 50 small business owners from across the country.

Information gathered at these hearings is included in the National Ombudsman's Annual Report to Congress, along with findings and recommendations about the regulatory enforcement environment and its effect on small business. Each federal regulatory agency is rated in the report based upon their responsiveness to small business comments.

The National Ombudsman's authority to respond to comments on compliance issues is limited to federal regulatory enforcement matters and does not include concerns about obtaining federal contracts or securing guaranteed loans.

For more information on the SBA's programs and services, visit the Web site at [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).

Interested small business owners, business organizations, and other individuals may find additional information, including online registration for *SBA Expo '04* events, at [www.sba.gov/50](http://www.sba.gov/50).

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