

Summary of Testimony
Ann S. Yahner
U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship
“Assessing Federal Small Business Assistance Programs for Veterans and Reservists”
January 31, 2007

Ann Yahner is the President and majority owner of Penobscot Bay Media, a service-disabled veteran-owned small business in Maine. Penobscot Bay Media is an Information Technology (IT) company that focuses on geographical information systems, web development, interactive distance learning, and audio and visual services. Yahner’s company was the only company in New England to be awarded the Vets GWAC (Government Wide Acquisition Contract).

As a result of the Vets GWAC award, Mrs. Yahner is confident her company can provide the variety of insurance needs of her employees. Because of the contract, she anticipates her company workforce could double in the next 12-18 months. Mrs. Yahner is a veteran and her company has started a program to hire qualified veterans, including those from the Maine National Guard and Reserves when they return from Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, her company has partnered with the University of Maine to develop training and certification programs in IT.

While Mrs. Yahner’s company is growing, she cites two large obstacles in doing business with the Federal Government: The process in which SDVOs (Service Disabled Veterans Organizations) are awarded contracts and Federal government accountability.

First, concerning contracts, Mrs. Yahner believes that SDVOs should be made equal to 8(a) businesses. Contracting officers are able to award contracts to 8(a) businesses without justifying their reasons. Furthermore, the officer’s decision cannot be appealed. In contrast, in order to award a contract to a SDVO, the officer must determine there are no other SDVOs able to do the work, consider the risk of protests to the award, and complete a Justification and Approval document for his determinations.

Second, Mrs. Yahner stated that when the Federal government does not meet its 3% SDVO goals, negative consequences need to be imposed. She believes SDVOs suffer when regulations are not enforced. In her opinion, these two points are crucial to the future of SDVOs. In sum, service disabled veterans organizations help veterans obtain employment, they bring Federal funds to small businesses, and increase economic development around the nation. Mrs. Yahner believes that because of this, SDVOs deserve an equal playing field with other contracting programs.