

RONALD R. AUMENT

Position Statement: NVSBC Board Member Application

I am pleased to submit my application to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Veterans Small Business Coalition (NVSBC). I and my company, Duty First Consulting LLC, have been actively involved with NVSBC and with the Washington Metropolitan Chapter of the SDVOSB Council prior to its merger with NVSBC. In my view, this merger was of immense importance to our shared community because it joined the complementary missions of: (1) providing veteran-owned businesses an incubator-like forum for business opportunities; and (2) providing a strong, visible and vocal platform of advocacy for veteran-owned businesses.

If elected to the NVSBC Board of Directors, my vision is two-fold. First is to build upon the robust NVSBC framework already in place to support veteran entrepreneurship, especially in the advocacy arena. I have been connected to veterans' issues for the entirety of my professional life, and I understand our shared need for a voice at the table where public policy affecting veteran businesses will be formulated. We must aggressively advocate and defend the shared interests of our community to ensure that veterans today and tomorrow have opportunities to share in the economic success of our nation. Secondly, I will strongly support the NVSBC goal of expanding its footprint beyond a Washington DC and Govcon focus. Government contracting has been and will remain an important source of opportunities for veteran-owned businesses, but veterans own nearly 8% of all businesses in America, and we can help provide a voice for an even broader universe of veteran business owners.

One of the most pressing issues currently confronting NVSBC is the Kingdomware decision and the forces within the federal government and the large business community that would advocate to overturn this decision. As the leading advocacy voice in the veteran-owned business community, it is critical that we defend the responsibilities Kingdomware has forced upon the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure their contracting practices reflect the "veterans first" policy imposed by law. VA's actions speak louder than their words, and it is telling that a Supreme Court decision was necessary to make VA honor the "rule of two." The large business Govcon community is adamantly opposed to the policy underlying Kingdomware and has already begun a lobbying effort to legislatively reverse this policy. I do not believe VA will be a champion for "veterans first," and I do believe NVSBC must step in to defend this critical benefit to veteran-owned businesses. I furthermore believe we should ultimately go beyond merely defending the "veterans first" policy as it applies to contracting with VA and advocate for expanding this policy to contracting with other federal agencies, particularly the Department of Defense and the military services. "Veterans first" should be more than a slogan.