



FIRST CALL

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May 2022



I have learned in my first two months as Deputy Executive Director that it is truly a privilege to serve you and our dedicated coalition. The warm welcome I have received, and the engaging conversations have helped me understand your business needs at great depth and how through NVSBC activities we can better:

- Connect veteran entrepreneurs with the business opportunities they need to succeed in the complex federal marketplace.
- Promote policies and acquisition strategies that further the participation of veteran-owned small businesses in federal contracting and subcontracting opportunities.
- Develop the knowledge base and skills veteran business owners need to function as successful federal contractors and subcontractors

With this week (May 1 – May 7) being [National Small Business Week](#), there is no better time to celebrate America's small businesses and their enormous contributions to American life and prosperity. Our coalition is eager to celebrate you and your business by offering unique benefits like we've never been able to offer before with the upcoming launch of NVSBC's very own **VetFedConnect™**.

VetFedConnect™ provides VOSB's and SDVOSB's access to own and update their profile, engage with fellow small business leadership, large GovCons, agency buyers, and other revenue building partners through a single interface. We know this will give you greater exposure as well as help you:

- Identify potential partners
- Connect with Federal buyers
- Connect with Large GovCon Primes
- Directly communicate with businesses
- Access business training
- Provide input to influence Federal policy
- Conduct market research

VetFedConnect™ will enable Federal Agencies and Large Government Primes access to:

- The capabilities of 47,000 SDVOSB's and VOSB's
- Direct communication with a community of potential qualified vendors
- Conduct market research
- Share information on upcoming solicitations, industry days, and events

VetFedConnect™ will be a game-changer! Please stay close to your email for the invitation to **VetFedConnect™** to find opportunities to connect and grow your business.

Let's Grow Together!

Zack Armstrong
Deputy Executive Director

Members Profile

Name of Business Owner: Bob Santmyer
Military Branch/Years Served: U.S. Air Force / 1978 to 1983
Occupation in Military: Telecommunications Specialist
Name of business: PenBay Technology Group LLC
Type of business: Information Technology and Outreach
Year Established: Established in 1999
Location(s): Union Hall, VA
Website: www.penbaytechgroup.com



What motivated you to start your own business?

PenBay Technology Group LLC, (“PenBay”), formerly Penobscot Bay Media LLC (PenBay Media), was founded in 1999 by Ann and Frank Yahner. Ann, a retired U.S. Navy Captain, was the majority owner of the business. I joined the company in 2011 to lead the business growth activities for the company. By 2016, after experiencing significant business growth over the preceding five years, Ann and Frank were ready to put a plan in place to fully retire, so they worked with me and an outside consultant (Sarah Djamshidi) to transfer the majority ownership over to me. I first met Sarah at NVSBC’s VETS17 event. Sarah worked with the Yahnners and me for the next two years to transition majority ownership of PenBay to me on September 30, 2019. My interest in taking the helm of PenBay was to carry on with the exceptional reputation the company had established over the previous 20 years, while looking to take PenBay to the next level in terms of growth. The challenge has been to keep the small-company, family-like feel for the company employees while growing our customer base, as well as ensuring the company's reputation as a true partner with our government customers continues. In February 2022, I changed the name of the company from Penobscot Bay Media to PenBay Technology Group to reflect the full capabilities of the company more accurately. PenBay Media (Outreach work) will continue to be an operating division of PenBay Technology Group. The core capabilities of PenBay are in the areas of Agile Application Development, GIS, Program Management, On-Site IT Support and Cybersecurity. We will continue to expand our reach in these technology disciplines, while also looking to incorporate new capabilities going forward.

What has been your biggest challenge(s) in the Federal marketplace and how did you overcome them?

Wow! Where do I begin? Here’s one: Within six months of taking over ownership of PenBay, the world was rocked by the COVID-19 pandemic. All businesses were confronted with unprecedented circumstances. For PenBay, 100% of our business was from Federal Government contracts (both prime and subcontracts). While shifting from on-site work to telework were challenges for some companies, it was not a significant challenge for PenBay. We had been a virtual worksite company for decades. The biggest challenge we had was associated with our subcontract to SAIC on the FAA Contoller Training Services (CTS) contract. At the time (March 2020) we had 35 employees supporting this FAA contract with no option for remote telework available. When the CARES Act was still being considered in Congress, I read every page of the Act to see what PenBay could benefit from. There were two parts of the CARES Act that PenBay could benefit from to keep from having to lay off our 35 employees supporting the FAA contract. The first was the PPP loan. PenBay was one of the first companies to receive a PPP loan, which was fully forgiven based on how the funds were used. The second was called Section 3610, which was assistance specifically for Federal Government contractors and subcontractors affected by Agency facility closures, where telework is not an option. This required the FAA to initiate action for these funds to be made available. I brought this to SAIC’s attention. SAIC then worked with the FAA to get this in place. Thanks to these two components of the CARES Act, PenBay was able to keep all employees fully employed during many months of facility closures – no PenBay employees went on unemployment during COVID-19.

What advice would you give to other veteran small business owners?

The best advice I can give to other veteran small business owners is to: 1) be patient, 2) identify a mentor to learn from, 3) work with your trusted relationships to help build your business. Don’t struggle on your own. Relationships are key to success

Student Veteran Josh Pearl Finds Success at Veteran Entrepreneur Training Symposium

While working at the IVMF, I was asked if I would go to Orlando, Florida, to support the Veteran Entrepreneur Training Symposium (VETS) 21. The annual event is hosted by the National Veteran Small Business Coalition (NVSBC).

The NVSBC is the largest non-profit trade association in the country representing veteran- and service-disabled veteran-owned small business (VOB and SDVOB) in the Federal marketplace. NVSBC works to ensure that veteran small businesses are given first consideration for federal prime and subcontract procurement opportunities.”

NVSBC engages regularly with Congress and Federal organizations to ensure these businesses are getting the help that they deserve.

VETS21 was held November 2-5, 2021, in Orlando. The event encouraged VOBs and SDVOBs to attend for reasons such as learning sessions focused on market intelligence and business strategy. For market intelligence, guests were able to experience market intel from “50+ government leaders across the VA, SBA, DoD, and 16 federal agencies.” For those wanting to strengthen their position for the upcoming year, attendees had the opportunity to communicate directly with government buyers and decision-makers. Every session that was held offered step-by-step tactics on how to accelerate business revenue.

Attendees also received business insights from keynote speakers including Tommy Moreno, co-founder & CEO of Pareto Labs, and Matt “Griff” Griffin, founder of Combat Flip Flops. A large part of the conference was dedicated to strategy sessions, where attendees had multiple opportunities to participate in small crash courses. Course topics included, “What do I really need to do? How much will it cost?”, “What you need to know for finding and winning low-hanging fruit,” and “Step-by-step advanced teaming strategies.” These are just a few of the many sessions available for participants to attend throughout the day.

My experience:

Prior to Orlando, I worked remotely with some of the staff at NVSBC to prepare for the big event. Some of the tasks worked on included speaker and instructor confirmations, data entry and management, and serving as a link between speakers and the NVSBC. The workload helped me to understand what needs to be done to prepare for and execute such an event.

After weeks of built-up excitement, I left the cold of New York and landed in Florida, happily wearing a short-sleeved shirt. When I arrived at the conference hotel, I finally got to shake the hands of the NVSBC staff, who would be my colleagues for the next few days. At this moment I felt like I was no longer a college senior who was expected to graduate in the spring, but rather an early career professional, linking up with important businesspeople who are ready to help others win in life. In Orlando, I assisted with a number of tasks such as prepping swag bags for attendees, setting up exhibitor booths, guiding people to their next session, linking up with keynote speakers and ensuring everything was ready for them prior to them speaking. I also took photos – lots and lots of photos. The little free time I had was spent conversing with attendees, hearing their story as an entrepreneur.!

LAUNCH YOUR FUTURE!



**National Veteran
Small Business
Coalition**

MAY 17-20, 2022

**DOUBLETREE HOTEL AT SEAWORLD
ORLANDO, FLORIDA**



Student Veteran Josh Pearl Finds Success at Veteran Entrepreneur Training Symposium (Con't)

Many companies in attendance had exhibition booths set up. This provided an opportunity for me to speak with them to get an idea of how they help not only entrepreneurs, but veterans specifically, to be set up for success.

The highlight of my trip was speaking with Matt “Griff” Griffin. We chatted one-on-one for about ten minutes prior to him taking the stage, telling his success story to inspire the audience. When I first met Griff, I was not familiar with him, but he had an air about him that made me want to learn more about his story and experiences.

It can be easy to recognize those who carry themselves confidently – you can see it in their eyes that they have something to be proud of, always striving for a purpose, and always wanting to achieve the next best goal. I have strived to have a positive and purposeful presence for a long time, and I was in the presence of someone who exuded that feeling to me instantaneously. This was an opportunity for me to learn. I knew when I was first introduced to Griff that I was going to feel inspired, and instead of me asking him all the question, he asked me who I was and what I planned to do with life. His goal for his keynote speech was to light a fire in the hearts and minds of his audience to motivate them to pursue their business goals and become successful entrepreneurs.

Interested in attending VETS22? You're in luck! The event will be held May 17-19 in Orlando, Florida. Registration closes soon so sign up today to participate in this incredible learning and networking event

[REGISTER HERE](#)

VetBiz Status Issues May Go to GAO, Not SBA

As veteran business owners competing for federal contracts, it might be hard to know where to lodge a protest when an award slips through your fingers. One issue in particular is counterintuitive: when an awardee of a VA set-aside contract is not in the Vendor Information Pages as of the date of award, that complaint goes to the Government Accountability Office.

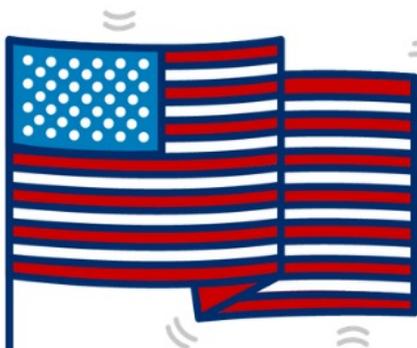
Under VAAR 819.7009, in setting aside an opportunity as a 100% SDVOSB set-aside, the VA is required to include FAR clause 852.219-10 (VA Notice of Total Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business Set Aside). This clause states in relevant part:

Any award resulting from this solicitation shall be made to a VIP-listed SDVOSB who is eligible at the time of the submission of offer(s) and at the time of award. FAR 852.219-10(b)(2).

VA effectively waives a mandatory solicitation requirement if it nonetheless makes an award to a firm not listed in the Vendor Information Pages. This is improper, as an offeror who fails to meet a solicitation's requirement that all offerors be VIP-listed verified SDOVBS both at the time of proposal submission and at the time of award renders that offeror ineligible for award. *See, e.g., Government Contracting Servs., LLC, B-405996* (Jan. 17, 2012), *Sanford Federal, Inc., B-417756* (September 12, 2019).

Accordingly, with a VA set-aside, as an initial matter the required VAAR clauses must be in the solicitation. If not, that is an issue to take up with the contracting officer before offers are due (any issues with solicitation content must be protested before offers are due). Then, if the award goes to a firm that was not in the Vendor Information Pages either as of the date of offer or upon award, that is in contravention of solicitation requirements. This is not a matter of veteran status, but whether the awardee meets these requirements. It goes to GAO.

Keep in mind that with evaluation and award issues, it's important to know proper forum, timing, and viable grounds and how to advance them. As such, if something's fishy, identify the issue as soon as possible and research where and when to raise it. If you do it wrong, you might lose out on a winning argument.



National Military Appreciation Month

How Much Does Your VetBiz Application Cost Uncle Sam?

Ever wonder how much it costs for the CVE to process your VetBiz application? An opinion and order issued by the United States Court of Federal Claims in a pending appeal provides some insight into that. *Monterey Consultants, Inc. v. U.S.*, No. 20-1663 (April 29, 2022). In 2018, Monterey was awarded the contract for VetBiz application processing, and it is now alleging that it suffered financial losses in performance due to an inaccurate pricing specification as well as the VA's constructive change to its contract.

As this case explains, the contractor processing the applications receives monies based on how far the applicants get into the process. This is called a "Case Equivalent" ratio, which signifies "the level of effort derived from the amount of time" the contractor spends performing required activities on an application. If the applicant withdraws after the welcome call, the contractor only receives .1 of the Case Equivalent; if it progresses all the way to an initial eligibility determination, the contractor receives a full 1.0 Case Equivalent. As set forth in this case, as of late 2018, a 1.0 Case Equivalent was priced at \$1,560.98.

Accordingly, if you are a VetBiz-verified firm, know that your verification comes with a price tag of at least \$1,560.98 for Uncle Sam. (This doesn't include the costs of maintaining the VetBiz portal, conducting site visits, and other related services). Obviously, your taxes pay the cost of the program, and there are plenty of inconveniences and contractor costs required for the privilege of doing business with the federal government, but at least the verification process is free (i.e., you don't have to pay to apply).

Interestingly, in this case Monterey alleged that the VA had used a flawed ratio system in determining how many applications would be processed in full, which resulted in Monterey making much less money than anticipated. In fact, the ratio the VA had offerors use in the solicitations (started applications versus completed applications) had *never* been achieved. Monterey alleged that the VA had "actual, superior knowledge regarding the CE ratio, about which Monterey had no reason to know, and that it failed to disclose that information, all of which misled Monterey in bidding the contract." Monterey is currently asking for damages in the amount of \$1,211,911.86 in additional compensation due to the defective CE unit price specification, as well as an adjustment of the unit price from \$1,560.98 to \$2,434.40. As such, maybe your application cost \$1,560.98, but that may represent a heck of a deal to which Uncle Sam was not entitled.



SCHEDULE

May 10 - Session 8, Category Management and GSA Schedules

May 24 - Session 9, How to Market and Team with Large Business

June 7 - Session 10, Where to look for traps in a RFP and how that ties to pre-award protests

June 14 - Session 11, Limitations on Subcontracting Compliance

June 24 - Session 12, Compliance Hacks: The Straight "As" of Accounting System Reviews



Homeland
Security



Thursday, June 9, 2022 • 8 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. ET

DHS and Industry Virtual PIL Boot Camp

Led by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Procurement Innovation Lab (PIL) Coaches, you will receive the exact same training delivered to government contracting professionals on how to use ten (10) of the most popular and tested innovative procurement techniques to shorten time to award, reduce barriers to non-traditional companies, increase competition, and improve mission outcomes.

Industry will have the opportunity to attend this training alongside DHS acquisition professionals to share their thoughts and ideas as well as learn the innovations!

Registration is on a first-come basis and limited to 125 attendees.

REGISTER BY JUNE 2, 2022

Click the link to register: <https://cvent.me/08Zn5Z>



SUPPORT H.R. 6527: DRIVING VETERANS SUCCESS ACT



The **H.R. 6527 - Driving Veterans Success Act** is a bipartisan bill. This legislation would establish a Veterans Business Enterprise Program that would require the Department of Transportation to set a goal of ensuring that at least 10% of federal highway and transit contracts go to veteran-owned small businesses. Currently, the Department of Transportation has no parity for Veteran/Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses in the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program. This could bring BILLIONS of dollars to the Veteran Business Community.

We need your support.

Veteran Business Organizations Nationwide
Support H.R. 6527: Driving Veterans Success Act

vibnetwork.org/support-legislation

If your Veteran Organization supports the Driving Veterans Success Act, email Rebecca@vibnetwork.org so we can add your logo to this growing list!



Orange County Veterans & Military Families Collaborative

