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News Release

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National Veterans Small Business Conference Selects New Orleans as 2011 Venue

WASHINGTON -- Thousands of small business owners, Veterans, military personnel and federal employees will attend the federal government's premier national event for Veteran-owned small business in New Orleans in August 2011.

"Not only did New Orleans meet our conference needs," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki, "It allows us to draw attention to a region that is successfully recovering from one of the worst natural disasters in our country's history."

The seventh annual National Veterans Small Business Conference and Exposition will be held in the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center August 15-18, 2011, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) officials announced today.

In 2011, VA replaces the U.S. Army as the principal conference sponsor. The Army established the event, previously held in Las Vegas, with the goal of providing Veteran business owners with important information about federal Veterans programs, business development strategies, and Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB) and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) legislation. Attendance has grown about 32 percent a year since its inception. In 2010, more than 3,300 people attended, well beyond the 2,600 expected. Half of the attendees at the 2010 conference were Veterans who owned small businesses. Other attendees included Veterans contemplating opening their own businesses and firms that wanted to do business with Veteran business owners.

New Orleans offers hotel accommodations ranging from luxury suites to inexpensive rooms for budget-conscious small-business owners, with accommodations for attendees who are disabled.

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The Morial Convention Center will welcome Veterans with a recently completed \$90 million restoration that began late in 2006. The facility is one of the most technologically advanced convention centers in the United States. Selection of the site will offer an economic boost to a region devastated by Hurricane Katrina and this summer's Gulf Oil spill – both considerations factored into the VA Secretary's decision to move the conference to New Orleans.

Scheduled to speak at the 2011 conference are Secretary Shinseki and New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu. There will be Veterans Affairs services and benefits information kiosks available through the exposition. VA invites all interested persons and businesses to attend. Visit www.va.gov/osdbu and check back frequently for new details.

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