

New York Visual Displays Entrepreneur And Veteran Successfully Lobbies Government For Veterans Funding

William (Bill) Levine, founder of WL Concepts, a custom displays and large format printing company, successfully lobbied the Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship to gain much needed funding for the Veterans Business Outreach Program.

July 9, 2008 (FPRC) -- , NY -- WL Concepts is a leader in creating visual and three-dimensional display signage. Founded in 2000 by Bill Levine, the company has grown from humble beginnings to work with some of the world's most recognizable brands such as Disney, Tommy Hilfiger, and Macy's.

Levine, who is a disabled Vietnam Veteran, started the visual displays company with the help of the Small Business Development Center (SBDC). The SBDC runs a variety of business programs in the community, one of which is the Veterans Business Outreach Program. The program, now in its ninth year, provides targeted business counseling and training directed toward veterans with a priority for service-related disabilities.

"The SBDC assists over 100 vets each month, plus 10 disabled vets with one-on-one business advisement. The vets have access to \$1,500,000 of capital each month or an investment of \$35,000/job. This is a really important part of the program as giving owners and workers appropriate levels of capital increases their productivity and ensures that we all can compete in the domestic and global economies," stated Levine.

Reflecting on the success of WL Concepts (<http://www.wlconcepts.com>), Levine saw the need for the program to continue well into the future. However, additional support and monetary funding was needed to continue to run the program successfully.

"WL Concepts now creates custom displays, pop displays, window graphics, and does large format printing for prestige brands all around the country. Without the support of the SBDC and the Veterans Business Outreach program I firmly believe that I would not have been as successful in the business as I have," said Levine.

On May 14th 2008, Levine participated in a Roundtable Meeting at the U.S. Senate to advocate for the continuance of the program and gain additional support. The meeting included an introduction from John Kerry (D-Mass, pictured above left with Levine) who is chairman of the Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship for the 110th Congress.

In his roundtable presentation, Levine recounted success stories from program participants from around New York. He also spoke of the Veterans Behind Bars (VB2) that works to equip inmates with the tools needed to open a business once they are released.

Levine presented a convincing case for continuance. The day after, \$500,000 in emergency funding was released by the federal government for ongoing support of the veterans program.

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