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6,000 expected at Cobo Center for June small-business conference for veterans

By Michelle Muñoz



Mayor Dave Bing and the chief of staff at the **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs** announced today that Detroit will host the **2012 National Veteran Small Business Conference and Hiring Fair**.

The event, set for June 25–29 at **Cobo Center**, will showcase resources and opportunities for businesses owned by veterans. Veterans Affairs Chief of Staff John Gingrich said more than 400 government procurement decision-makers will be at the event.

Last year's event, in New Orleans, drew more than 5,000 attendees. It is estimated that this year's will draw 6,000 and have a \$3 million to \$5 million direct spending effect on Detroit, Gingrich said.

Added to the conference this year is the "VA for Vets" hiring fair. Gingrich said the fair features on-site interviews and networking opportunities.

A similar hiring fair in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 18 attracted more than 4,100 veterans.

Bing said the conference's coming to Detroit is a positive sign for employment in the city. Detroit's unemployment rate is about 40 percent when it includes residents who have stopped looking for work.

"We are elated ... that you chose Detroit," Bing said. "It's a beacon that we are going to use around the country to say Detroit is open for business."

Bing said he and his administration were thankful to the VA for choosing Detroit and ready to showcase what the city has to offer visitors.

"It could have been very easy and nonconfrontational to go somewhere else," Bing said. "But you chose a city in need and a city that is going to come back. ... We're very appreciative."

Michigan is home to more than 700,000 veterans, and about 330,000 are served by the VA medical center in Detroit, Veterans Affairs officials said.

For more information about the conference, visit nationalveteransconference.com.

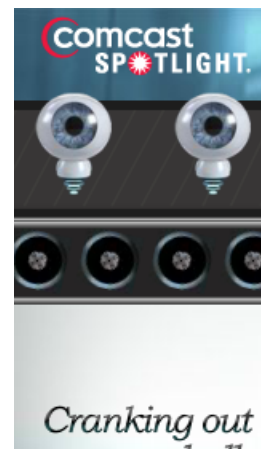


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