

What 10,000 Miles on the Road Has Taught Me

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What 10,000 miles on the road has taught me

Dan Nordberg, SBA Region VIII Administrator



When I became Regional Administrator at the U.S. Small Business Administration, I never would have imagined the many positive experiences and challenges I've experienced during my visits across the Rocky Mountain Region. Twelve months, six states, and nearly 10,000 miles later, I have taken the road less travelled and learned that the small business vitality of our local communities is getting stronger each day thanks to pro-growth economic policies that have been implemented over the past year. The small business climate has changed for the better with the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, a reduction in red tape and government bureaucracy, and a new positive outlook that has infiltrated both big and small businesses across the nation.

This positive outlook was verified during Small Business Saturday, held on Nov. 24, which kicked off the holiday shopping season for small businesses with record levels of participation. Total reported spending among U.S. consumers who said they shopped at independent retailers and restaurants on that day reached a record high of \$17.8 billion, according to data released from the 2018 Small Business Saturday Consumer Insights Survey from American Express and the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB). Based on this annual survey over the years, Small Business Saturday spending has now reached a reported estimate of \$103 billion since the day began in 2010.

Even though retail sales continue to be a bright spot this holiday season, there still are pockets of the economy that continue to struggle and need help. Rural communities represent more than just vast farmlands and mountain towns, they are the fabric of our country. Unfortunately, main streets in small town America have struggled in recent years. Negative forces including demographic shifts, a lack of access to capital, and unreliable internet service have hampered many rural businesses' ability to grow and expand.

Moving into 2019, the SBA will focus its programs and services toward improving access to capital for small businesses in rural communities as well as a renewed attention to providing business training and access to federal contracts for businesses located in those same areas. To that end, the SBA recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to strategically align our investment, training, and support capabilities for rural markets. Ensuring that rural entrepreneurs have the same opportunities as their urban counterparts is a top priority for the Trump administration. I look forward to working with USDA, and all our federal partners, as we strive to create an environment conducive to growth and prosperity for rural America.

My mantra remains that small business is big business in Colorado. Colorado's 611,000 small businesses continue to generate two of every three net new jobs and deliver essential goods and services to the state's population. As the voice of our nation's entrepreneurs, the U.S. Small Business Administration celebrates the United States' 30 million small businesses that still ignite our local economies and enrich our communities throughout the year. I look forward to the challenges the next 12 months have in store for me here at the SBA. All of us at the SBA are ready and willing to do what's necessary to help our rural neighbors prosper in 2019. For more information on SBA's programs and services please visit www.sba.gov and remember to follow us on Twitter @SBARockymtn.

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