

Employers: Taxes, overtime rule hurt business

By Nathaniel Shuda

OSHKOSH - Employers need to educate their workers about how taxes and government regulations are hurting small businesses in the Fox Valley.

That was the message shared by more than a dozen business, economic development and government leaders Monday during a Job Creators Network town hall with U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh.

"It's truly about educating our workforce," said Alfredo Ortiz, president and CEO of the Atlanta-based Job Creators Network.

The network is traveling the country on a Bring Small Businesses Back bus tour to raise awareness about what it says are the three biggest problems facing small businesses today: over-taxation, over-regulation and lack of access to credit. In an attempt to combat those issues, the network is providing employers with free resources to increase workers' awareness about such issues.

"It doesn't matter whether you have a D, an R or an I next to your name; it's hurting you all equally," Ortiz said.

The most-popular topic during Monday's discussion was the U.S. Department of Labor's new overtime rule, which will require employers to pay time-and-a-half for overtime work to employees who make less than \$47,476 a year. Overtime work means anything more than 40 hours a week.

"It's something we're fighting on," Grothman said. "It says you're in trouble if you work more than 40 hours a week.

"Certainly, people who get ahead don't work 40 hours a week," Grothman said. "Basically what this rule does is it makes it against the law to work hard."

Bob Gluth, owner of the CORRIM Company, said he's worried the changes will mean fewer benefits for his employees.

"It creates two classes of salaried employees," Gluth said. "The pie is only so big, and if you have to increase salaries or wages, it has to come from somewhere, and it's probably going to be from benefits."

Many front-line workers don't understand the implications such rules have on their employer's bottom line, but the Job Creators Network hopes the Employer to Employee Education Program will help educate workers about the realities of running a small business in today's regulatory environment, Ortiz said.

"It's about paychecks, not politics," Ortiz said, noting the program isn't about telling employees whom to vote for but rather "at least be educated with facts."

The only reason companies like CR Meyer have grown is because of their ability to let employees work more than 40 hours a week, said Fred Rideout, risk management director for the Oshkosh-based contractor.

"We have to have fair, adequate, equitable rules and regulations so that it's fair across the board, so that everybody has the opportunity," Rideout said. "We need to educate our people to educate other people about the truth."