

Siri wins GOP honor: Bush Advisory Council member is Texas Businesswoman of Year

Lewisville, TX- A leadership consultant from Highland Village was recently named Texas Businesswoman of the Year by the National Republican Congressional Committee.

Leanne Siri's award, presented earlier this month in Washington, was a result of her service on President Bush's Business Advisory Council.

The council, to which Siri was nominated in August 2003, is a small group of conservative businesspeople that serves as a sort of "focus group" to Republicans to give feedback on how proposals will affect small-business owners.

"Small business really is the backbone of America," Siri said. "Even though you hear more about big business, it's the small ones that support the economy in a major way."

Siri is the president and chairman of The Renaissance Group, a franchise of Leadership Management International, which has 200 offices nationwide and in 60 countries. The company works with both small and large businesses to strategically grow people and companies to be more successful.

Often, she'll receive a fax asking her to voice her opinion about a particular proposal and is given a deadline to respond so that her feedback can be included as decisions are being made. Other times, she will record videos on specific topic to be seen by political officials.

To learn more about current issues, the council usually meets once every two months, usually in Washington, but sometimes in other places. Siri said she foots the bill for travel to the sessions, at which they'll hear independent counsel on a variety of topics. And, if she needs information to help with a decision, she can call on Congressmen or specialists in the area, through the council.

While she has been surprised by the attention politicians are giving the Advisory Council, Siri said the increasing number of small business has only heightened the need for their concerns to be heard.

"It's refreshing to see that key people are not only interested, but taking action, based on what small business owners have to say," she said.

Siri said she wasn't very politically oriented before being invited to join the Business Advisory Council, and had always declared herself as an independent.

"I had the misinterpretation that what they did in Washington didn't have an impact in my life," she said. "I found out I was definitely wrong and that there is a tie to business."

It even took House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, R-Sugar Land, to call Siri directly to invite her to serve on the council, before she knew this was serious.

"His secretary called me twice before and I sort of hung up on her because I thought they were just looking for political contributions," she said. "The third time, he called himself and I listened."

The 45-year-old businesswoman is a mother of three sons, ages 18 to 24, and has lived in Highland Village for the past 10 years. In October 2003, she also received the Congressional Medal of Leadership.

In her business, Siri works with both private businesses and public education at the leadership level. Her clients include Citigroup, Associates of North America, the California State Department and the Nevada State Department.

"I love it. This doesn't even feel like work," she said. "There's nothing better than making people successful." Contact staff writer Nicole Bywater at 972-538-2115 or bywater@starcntexas.com.