

**Report to the General Assembly:
Office of Small Business Advocate**

A Report to the Governor and 107th Tennessee General Assembly

**Office of Small Business Advocate
July 1, 2011**



**STATE OF TENNESSEE
COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY
OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCATE**

James K. Polk State Office Building
505 Deaderick Street, Suite 1700
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-1402

**Justin P. Wilson
Comptroller**

July 1, 2011

The Honorable Bill Haslam, Governor
The Honorable Ron Ramsey, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the Senate
The Honorable Beth Harwell, Speaker of the House of Representatives
State Capitol
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Haslam, Lieutenant Governor Ramsey, and Speaker Harwell:

Transmitted herewith is the annual report from the Office of Small Business Advocate pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated Section 8-4-706.

Thank you for your consideration of this report, and please do not hesitate to contact our office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Lauren V. Plunk
Small Business Advocate

BACKGROUND

On July 1, 2010, Public Chapter 1129, Acts of 2010 became law and established the Office of Small Business Advocate (Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-4-701 et seq.). The Office of Small Business Advocate is administratively attached to the Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury. Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated Section 8-4-702(c), the Comptroller appointed Josh Helton as Small Business Counsel. Josh Helton served in this capacity until April 6, 2011. The Office of Small Business Advocate is currently staffed by Lauren Plunk and Tanya Stoner.

PURPOSE

The Office of Small Business Advocate will provide information and answer questions for owners of businesses with fifty (50) or fewer employees. The Office has the authority to act as an informal mediator to help resolve issues involving small businesses and state departments and agencies.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the Office include: receiving comments from small business owners regarding actions by agency or department employees conducting compliance or enforcement activities; referring comments from small business owners to the contact person of the affected agency or department in the appropriate circumstances and to maintain the confidentiality of the identity of the person making such comment; assisting with the resolution of issues concerning small business owners and state departments and agencies; rating agencies on the extent to which they notify small business owners about the existence of the small business advocate.

ORGANIZATION

The Office is currently staffed with the small business advocate and an executive secretary.

OPERATIONS

The Office is currently located on the 17th Floor of the James K. Polk Building, 505 Deaderick Street, Nashville, Tennessee, 37243. The current contact information for the Office is:

Office of Small Business Advocate
1700 James K. Polk Building
505 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN 37243
Phone: (615) 741-7806
Toll-free phone: 1-866-831-3750
Fax: (615) 741-1551
Email: smallbusiness.advocate@tn.gov

ACTIVITIES

The Office provides advice and guidance orally and in writing to small business owners.

Frequent inquires by topic:

- Role of the Office
- General information on starting a business in Tennessee
- Tax issues
- Financial assistance available to small business owners
- Licensure issues
- Workers' compensation issues
- Environmental regulation issues
- Procurement issues

GOALS

The Office has several objectives for the year including:

- Work with departments and agencies to better inform small business owners that are currently in contact with a department or agency about the existence and purpose of the Office of Small Business Advocate.
- Continue to collect data and information from small business owners about regulatory issues that have a negative impact on the small business community.
- Recommend ways to reduce burdensome and unnecessary regulation on small business owners.
- Develop a rating and evaluation system to assess responsiveness of departments and agencies to small business owners' concerns.
- Conduct educational awareness campaigns statewide about the activities of the small business advocate and resources that are available to small businesses.

WEBSITE

The enabling legislation requires the Office of Small Business Advocate to have an internet presence. Tennessee Code Annotated Section 8-4-707 requires the Office to post to its website the contact information for the small business advocate and the names of all contact persons for each state department and agency as provided in Tennessee Code Annotated Section 8-4-703.

The home page for the Office of Small Business Advocate is located at

www.comptroller1.state.tn.us/OSBA/ .

The department and agency contact list for the Office of Small Business Advocate is located at

<http://www.comptroller1.state.tn.us/OSBA/ContactList.asp> .