

The 2015 Annual Report of the Office of Small Business Advocate is prepared in accordance with Tennessee Code Annotated §8-4-706. This report provides an overview of the Office's activities during the past year. Over the last four years, the Office has worked to improve small business owners' interactions with their Tennessee state government.

HISTORY OF THE OFFICE

Public Chapter 1129, Acts of 2010 established the Office of Small Business Advocate (Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-4-701 et seq.). The Office of Small Business Advocate is housed in the Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury and serves as a point of contact for Tennessee small business owners to state government. The mission of the Comptroller's Office is to improve the quality of life for all Tennesseans by making government work better. The Office of Small Business Advocate supports the mission by making government work better for Tennessee's small business owners.

OFFICE GOALS

The objectives of the Office of Small Business Advocate are to:

- ★ Answer questions and provide information to Tennessee's residents who are starting a small business or who already own a small business.
- ★ Informally mediate and assist with the resolution of issues concerning small business owners and state departments or agencies.
- ★ Work with each state agency and department with regulatory authority over businesses to ensure that small business owners who receive or are subject to an audit, on-site inspection, compliance assistance effort, or other enforcement related communication or contact by agency or department personnel are provided with a means to communicate or comment on the enforcement activity conducted by such personnel.
- ★ Receive comments from small business owners regarding actions by agency or department employees conducting compliance or enforcement activities.
- ★ Refer comments from small business owners to the contact person of the affected agency or department in the appropriate circumstances, and maintain the confidentiality of the identity of the person making such comments.

RAISING AWARENESS

During the past year, the Small Business Advocate raised awareness of the office and the services it provides by:

- Participating in the TDOT Small Business Conference in August 2014.
- Participating in the Nashville Mayor's Small Business Conference in May 2015
- Working with media on interviews, articles, and newspaper columns.
- Meeting with community groups and civic organizations across the state.

INQUIRIES BY THE NUMBERS

- Since its creation, the Office has assisted in resolving more than 1,300 inquiries.
- From July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015, the Office assisted small businesses with 357 inquiries.
- Awareness of the Office continues to improve. On average, the Office receives seven new inquiries a week.

SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCATE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does the Office of Small Business Advocate do?

The Small Business Advocate is housed within the Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury and was established to make state government more responsive to Tennessee's small business owners. When a Tennessee small business owner has questions about what department they need to speak with in state government, or if they are experiencing difficulties with a state department or agency, they contact the Office of Small Business Advocate.

What is a small business?

The Office of Small Business Advocate was established to serve business owners with fifty (50) or fewer employees.

When should a small business owner contact the Office of Small Business Advocate?

If you do not know who to see, or what procedure to use, contact the office. If you have attempted to resolve an issue with a department or agency and are unable to reach a solution or you are having difficulties navigating state government, contact the Small Business Advocate.

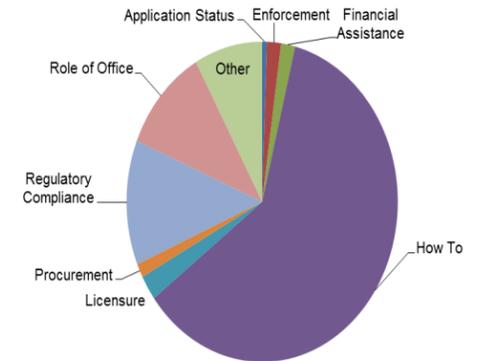
Who does the Office of Small Business Advocate contact within a department or agency to resolve an issue?

The law requires leaders of the departments or agencies with regulatory authority over small businesses to appoint an employee to serve as the Office of Small Business Advocate's point of contact. A complete list of these individuals can be found at www.comptroller.tn.gov/osba.

What if I don't feel comfortable sharing my identification with the department or agency?

The Small Business Advocate has the authority to maintain the confidentiality of the small business owner. Depending on the issue, sharing your identification may be helpful in finding the best solution. The Small Business Advocate will ask if you are comfortable sharing your identity before contacting a department or agency.

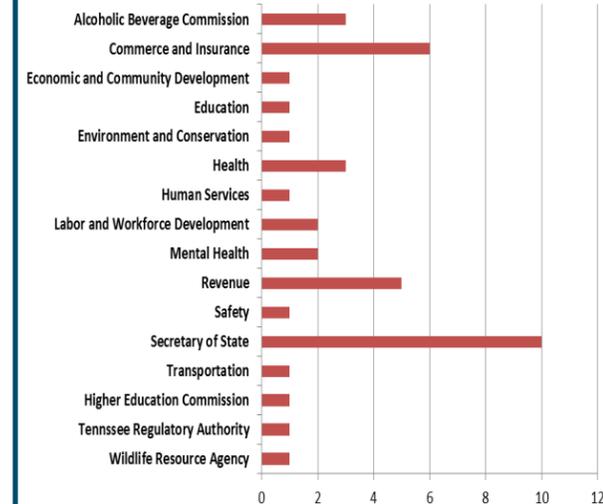
INQUIRIES BY TOPIC



Number of inquiries by topic:

- Application Status — 2
- Enforcement — 6
- Financial Assistance — 6
- How To — 217
- Licensure — 9
- Procurement — 5
- Regulatory Compliance — 45
- Role of Office — 38
- Other — 29

Number of Inquiries by Agency



MESSAGE FROM THE SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCATE

As my first year as Small Business Advocate comes to an end, I want to take the time to let you, the 109th General Assembly, know that I am here to work for you and the small business owners in your communities. Throughout this past year, the Office of Small Business Advocate has seen continued growth. I believe this growth is a direct reflection of how attractive Tennessee has become to entrepreneurs and the businesses that are relocating to our great state. According to Chief Executive Magazine, Tennessee ranks in the top five in their most recent list of best states for business in 2015.

Since the creation of the Office of Small Business Advocate in 2010, the office has received over 1,300 inquiries. My focus for this year is to see that number continue to rise. Throughout the year, I will be traveling around the state meeting with various small business groups and individuals to see how the Office of Small Business Advocate can be of assistance to them.

Some small business owners do not know who to turn to when they have questions, or when they feel like they have been treated unfairly. As Small Business Advocate, I am that voice for small business owners. It is an honor to serve as Tennessee's Small Business Advocate.

If you have any questions, please contact me.



Richard Wilson
Small Business Advocate



AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS

Tennessee Code Annotated § 8-4-705 requires the Office of Small Business Advocate to evaluate and report annually to the General Assembly on state government's responsiveness to small business owners' concerns. On January 1, 2013, a rating system for timeliness of response was implemented. For a chart showing this year's ratings of state agencies, please visit our website.

AGENCY CONTACTS

As required by Tennessee Code Annotated § 8-4-703, 30 state departments and agencies report having regulatory authority over business and have provided the Office of Small Business Advocate with a contact person. These contacts assist in the resolution of issues involving their agency. A complete list of agency contacts is available on our website.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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www.comptroller.tn.gov/osba



OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCATE

ANNUAL REPORT
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Comptroller of the Treasury

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Small Business Advocate